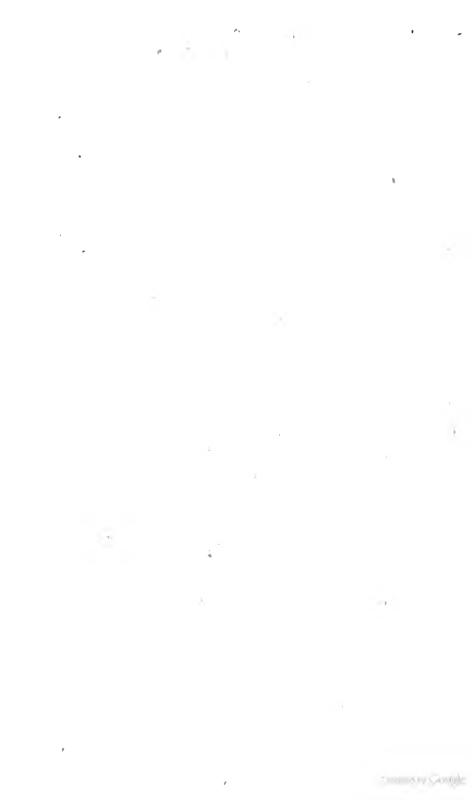




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CONJECTURES  
AND  
RESEARCHES  
CONCERNING THE  
LOVE, MADNESS, AND IMPRISONMENT  
OF  
TORQUATO TASSO,

BY  
RICHARD HENRY WILDE.

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VOL. II.

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Di mia favola, lunga il filo incerto  
Con nodi inestricabili è sì involto,  
Che per arte, di Febo esser disciolto,  
on può, se Dei non manda il cielo aperto,  
Or chi sciorallo?

T. TASSO.—*Sopra gli accidenti, della sua vita.*

Onde Torquato . . . . .  
Ebbe la fama, che volontier mirro.

DANTE.—*Paradiso*, canto vi., v. 46-48.

Quel da Esti il fe far, che m' avea in ira  
Assai più là, che il dritto, non volea.

DANTE.—*Purgatorio*, canto v., v. 77, 78.

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## CHAPTER I.

EARLY in October of this year, (1578,) Tasso wrote from Urbino to Count DOMENICO ALBANO, begging his good offices with the Cardinal. A short extract from this letter will be sufficient :

“ The great malignity of others, and my own little prudence, as well in not knowing how to dissemble injuries, as in resenting them with too much freedom of language ; my overweening confidence in friends, and the faithlessness I have found in them, have plunged me into a state so exceedingly miserable, that the least of many evils which I now suffer, would formerly, alone, have seemed insupportable. Yet could I be assured that snares are not laid for my life, and that the Duke of Ferrara, holding me justified, or not caring about my justification, would quiet me from all apprehensions of his anger, my other griefs would give me little

trouble, and I should hope to overcome them without the aid of others. But what relates to my safety, if it be not undertaken by some person of great authority, who will exert himself earnestly for me, cannot be sustained by my own feeble strength.”\*

Whether the DUKE of URBINO was unwilling to increase the causes of misunderstanding between himself and ALPHONSO, by the open protection of a fugitive laboring under his displeasure, or ingratitude, treachery, and injustice, had now rendered TASSO habitually misanthropical and suspicious, he left URBINO shortly afterwards, and journeyed, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot, to the dominions of the Duke of Savoy. He arrived at the gates of TURIN in such wretched plight, that, according to Ingegneri, he was at first refused admission by the guards, from a belief of his insanity.† Writing thence, on All-Souls' day, to the Cardinal Albano, he entreats pardon for having distrusted him, as with fluctuating sus-

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 59, ed. di Pisa.

† Serassi, Vita, 275, n. 2.

picious he had done many others most worthy of his confidence, and begs the Cardinal's interposition to restore him to the favor of those princes whom his ill-fortune and melancholy humor had alienated from him. He mentions the offers made to him at Turin, and requests the cardinal to establish him in the service of the Duke of Savoy, promising more for him than he could for himself, and exercising such authority over him as to confirm his resolutions whenever they vacillated from inconstancy or folly, assuring his friend that, even though his infirmity should hurry him into any levity, no imagination, not even of the most cruel death, shall ever transport him into an act less than good and honorable."\*

On the first of December, (1578,) he addressed the Cardinal again, imploring his assistance "to relieve him from the miserable condition into which his own want of caution, and excess of fancy, had brought him."†

In the interval, he received a letter from MAURIZIO CATANEO, the Cardinal's secretary,

\* Lettere, tom. iv., 138, 139.

† Id., tom. v., p. 64.

giving him hopes of favor, as may be inferred from his reply :

*“ To Maurizio Cataneo, Secretary of Cardinal Albano.*

“ Your letter has been dear to me above all things, from the hopes it gives me of an answer from Cardinal ALBANO, which, if it comes, will be one of the greatest favors I have received in these years of affliction, and will seem to restore me to the laws of other men, to which I would rather be restored than gain a million of gold. And although I am well aware, that I myself, with my false imaginings, have caused myself to be excluded from them, nevertheless I believe much was owing to the malignity of fortune, not to say of men. However that may be, I will yield myself so obediently to the commands of the cardinal, (if he will not decline my cure as desperate,) that he shall never repent of having taken every thing upon himself. And though I desire to be relieved by any means, his agency will be dearest to me, and more especially if exercised with the Duke of Ferrara rather than any other ; so

that his highness may be content not only to restore my books, writings, and other trifles, but to give me also some hundreds of crowns, that I may finish the work begun under his protection, and remain with the Marquess\* in tolerable poverty, because that which I endure must in the end prove insufferable. And the Duke should do so, not merely because it is his habit not to be wanting to any of his servants, but because I have revered and loved him sincerely, and many faults are forgiven to those who have loved much. But the Cardinal will do as he thinks best, and I commit myself to his prudence. I am infinitely obliged by his having obtained me the pardon of the Cardinals of ESTE† and MEDICI,‡ though I do not know how I offended the Cardinal of ESTE, except by quitting his house, and Rome, without taking leave. But the first fault was from too much humor, and in the last I was not to

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\* The Marquess of Este.

† Cardinal Luis d' Este, in whose service Tasso formerly was.

‡ Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, afterwards Grand Duke of Tuscany.

blame, being in the power of others. The Cardinal de' MEDICI has greater causes of irritation against me, and I am so much the more obliged to Cardinal ALBANO for his having forgiven them : and every sign he gives of holding me in the same esteem as formerly will be most dear to me. Of those two great cardinals I am the most humble servant, and of the abbot, and Signor SCIPIO GONZAGA, the servant I have always been, and even more, inasmuch as my fortune and my mind are less than what they were. My intellect, nevertheless, in all that respects composition, is in its wonted vigor, as you will soon be able to judge, by a dialogue on nobility which I am writing.

I had resolved to go to Ferrara, but the hopes given me of an answer from the Cardinal, and the fear of missing it, detained me. I will do what he advises, and go there, or even to Rome, if requisite. Know, however, that I have particular obligations to the Duke of SAVOY, and would not spare to die in his service if an occasion offered befitting a man of honor ; for such, with the aid of heaven and the Cardinal, I hope to prove myself so completely by my actions, as to put down all the rumors of my



past life, true or false. Turin, 1st December, 1578.”\*

Cardinal ALBANO's much-desired answer was as follows :

“ *To Signor Torquato Tasso.*

“ You could not adopt a better mode to obtain pardon, recover honor, and satisfy your friends, than to confess the error you have committed, in suspecting every one indifferently, which indeed has been no less worthy of laughter than compassion. God grant that as you now perceive your mistake, you will always remember it for the future, and you should do so the more readily, because I assure you, upon my honor, that no one thinks, or attempts, in any manner to hurt you, but all love you, and wish you a long and happy life, on account of your singular merit. You may have seen, and may see, from their results, that your fears and suspicions are nothing but false imaginings, whence it is requisite you should banish

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 61, ed. di Pisa.

them entirely, and by doing so you will be equally loved and honored. Otherwise you will lose life and reputation together, and while you think to shun death, wandering here and there, it will encounter you without fail very soon. Calm yourself then, and attend to your studies, and rejoice at being with so good and noble a lord as the Marquess of ESTE. And because it is necessary that you should tear up this peccant humor by the roots, and that cannot be done without medicine, you must allow yourself to be prescribed for by the physicians, counselled by your friends, and governed by your patrons, and believe, in fine, that I am, and will ever be, one of the first to love and favor you, and may God have you in his care. Rome, 29th November, 1578.”\*

“Your lordship’s letter,” says TASSO, addressing the CARDINAL in reply, “was inexpressibly welcome, rather because I perceive myself in your favor, than because I received from it any alleviation of my wretchedness. I

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 64, ed. di Pisa.

hope, nevertheless, to find some, and meanwhile supplicate your lordship to employ all your influence with the serene LORD DUKE of FERRARA, with whom I know how much you can effect, and by whom I desire to be released from this misery rather than any other. Turin, 14th December, 1578."\*

The Cardinal, says SERASSI, exerted himself effectually with the Duke, who was well disposed to grant TASSO all he desired, and receive him anew into his service, provided he would allow himself to be cured, and would behave in a proper manner; because, the last time he was in FERRARA, transported by his fancies, he had probably used extravagant and discourteous language towards some of the courtiers. His lordship, therefore, caused it to be signified to TASSO, that the nuptials of the Duke ALPHONSO with MARGHERITA GONZAGA, daughter of Duke WILLIAM of MANTUA, being about to be concluded, if he went to Ferrara on that happy occasion, he would obtain

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 65.

from the Duke, besides the restoration of his books and manuscripts, many favors, and the means of remaining honorably at court.

Overjoyed at the proposal, the poet requested the Marquess of ESTE's leave to set out. This prudent nobleman, though willing to oblige him, either because he doubted the Duke's good dispositions, or feared TORQUATO was not in a condition to attend the festivities, without committing some extravagance, attempted to dissuade him from the journey, promising to take him to Ferrara himself in the spring.\* In spite of his counsel, however, and that of FORNI, and of CAVALLERINO, the Marquess's secretary, who earnestly endeavored to divert him from his purpose, he was obstinately bent on leaving Turin, and hastening to the spot where he expected at least comfort and security, and found obloquy and a prison.

This ardent longing after a place from whence he had twice fled in apprehension or disgust, where he believed his life to be in danger, and had suffered many persecutions, though now manifested for the second time, has

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\* Serassi, Vita.

never been adequately accounted for. SERASSI, speaking of his first absence, says, the thoughts of Ferrara, and the writings he left there, would not let him rest. Thoughts of Ferrara, many, and sad, and deep, must indeed have pursued him every where. That they were all for his manuscripts cannot be imagined. Nor can the *Abate* be implicitly credited, when he attributes the poet's return to his extraordinary devotion towards the person of ALPHONSO. One of his sonnets, most probably written during his wanderings in 1577 or 1578, indicates another, perhaps a deeper and a tenderer interest.

"SONNET 342.

HE COMPARES HIMSELF TO ULYSSES.

Wandering ULYSSES on the storm-vexed shore  
 Lay amid wrecks, upon the sand scarce dry,  
 Naked and sad: hunger and thirst he bore,  
 And hopeless gazed upon the sea and sky:  
 When there appeared — (so willed the Fates on high,)  
 A royal dame to terminate his wo;  
 'Sweet fruits,' she said, 'sun-tinged with every dye  
 My father's garden boasts — would'st taste them? Go!'  
 For me, alas! though shivering in the blast  
 I perish — a more cruel shipwreck mine —  
 Who from the beach, where famishing I'm cast,  
 Will point to royal roofs, for which I pine?

If 'tis not THOU! — moved by my prayers at last,  
What shall I call thee? — GODDESS! by each sign.”\*

It is apparent, from a letter of his to Cardinal ALBANO, that he returned to the court of ALPHONSO with very moderate hopes :

“ I thank your lordship,” says he, “ for the favor shown me by his serene highness the DUKE of FERRARA, whom I am ready to satisfy

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\* Rime, Parte Prima, vol. iii., tom. i., p. 176.

“SONNETTO” 342.

SI PARAGONA AD ULISSE.

Giaceva esposto il peregrino Ulisse  
Mesto, ed ignudo sovra i lidi asciutti,  
Ch' agitato poco anzi era da' flutti  
In cui lungo digiun sostenne, e visse,  
Quando (com' alta sorte a lui prescrisse)  
Donne real fin pose a' suoi gran lutti:  
Vattene agli orti, ove perpetui frutti  
Ha il mio buon padre, ivi godrai, gli disse.  
Misero! a me dopo naufragi indegni  
Famelico gittato in fredda riva,  
Chi fia che mostri i regj tetti, e gli orti?  
Se tu non sei, cui tanti preghi ho porti;  
Ma qual chiamar ti debbo, o donna, o Diva?  
Dea, Dea, sei certo, io ti conosco a 'segni.”

by allowing myself to be cured, and behaving to his people as he desires. I have so written to the Count SCIPIO SACRATO, his favorite, and he may send me to Ferrara. I supplicate your lordship to favor my departure, and be assured that I will renounce all hope of future greatness for a little present comfort. I am nevertheless resolved to accommodate myself to my fortune, and most humbly kiss your hands. Turin, 10th February, 1579."

He arrived in Ferrara the twenty-first of February, 1579, the day before the new Duchess reached Belvedere, and the court being entirely occupied with the ceremonies, he could not obtain audience either of the Duke or his sisters.

From the ministers and courtiers he met with nothing but rudeness and inhumanity. Two of his letters, written shortly after his arrival, sufficiently attest the coldness of his reception, and the non-fulfilment of the promises made to him.

" *To Maurizio Cataneo.*

" I wrote you the other day that I had ar-

rived in Ferrara. Now I have to inform you that I met with the difficulty I apprehended, not at all overcome by the favor of my Lord Cardinal, or by any sort of humility in my power. I thought it best to advise you of it, and to pray you would procure me so strong a letter of recommendation to the Duke, that I may get my books and manuscripts, and the means of supporting myself here, or of going to Rome. I know it would be easy for the Cardinal to obtain me this favor, if he will ask it. Ferrara, 24th February, 1579,"\*

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*“ To Cardinal Albano.*

“Signor Maurizio gave me to understand by his letters, that coming to these nuptials, I should receive from the Duke my books and manuscripts and the means of subsistence. It appears very doubtful whether the effect will conform to my wishes, because it seems to me the mind of the Duke is hardened against me. I shall not cease to do all I can to appease him, and supplicate your lordship to favor me with a letter,

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\* *Lettere*, tom. v., p. 69, ed. di Pisa.



at least in so far as relates to the restitution of the things that belong to me; for the rest I will be content with his highness's pleasure. 24th February, 1579."\*

On the 12th of March he wrote again to Cardinal Albano, saying :

. . . . . "I entreat your lordship to write to the Duke of Ferrara so efficiently in my behalf, that he may restore me the place and provision I had in his service, or one in his court equal to that which I at first enjoyed." And, in a postscript, he adds, "I implore you, above all things, to procure me some place of permanent abode, where it will be possible for me to study."

"From whence it is apparent," says Serassi, "that all this time he was obliged to seek temporary lodgings, first at one place and then at another, having been unable to procure any fixed habitation. And, in fact," he continues, "on his arrival at Ferrara, he was not received

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 68, ed. di Pisa.

by any dependents of the DUKE, but by those of the Cardinal d' ESTE, who did not, however, perform any of the promises made to him by Cardinal Albano. So that TASSO, after having patiently suffered this harshness for some time, and still finding himself constantly disfavored by the Duke and the Princesses, abandoned by his friends, and scoffed at by his adversaries, could no longer restrain himself within the bounds of moderation, but giving free vent to his rage, broke out publicly into the most injurious and abusive language possible, against the Duke, the whole house of ESTE, and the principal noblemen of the court ; retracting all the praises he had bestowed on any of them, cursing his past servitude, and denouncing them all as a pack of ingrates, cowards, and scoundrels.\*

“ The Duke,” continues Serassi, “ apprised of this vile language and of TASSO’s ill-will to his serene highness and whole house, was too generous and magnanimous to exhibit any re-

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\* Serassi’s account of the language is not borne out by TASSO’s authority. See the extracts from the Discourse to Gonzaga, post.

sentment against the unhappy poet, but, respecting the excellence of his genius and the merit of his incomparable poem, ordered him to be taken to the hospital of Sant' Anna, and there well guarded in close custody as a maniac."

The biographer then adduces various proofs that these rash and foolish words were the *only* cause of Tasso's imprisonment, an hypothesis hereafter to be tested.

The date of this occurrence was about the middle of March, 1579. The place of his confinement, an asylum for the indigent sick, and insane : the period of his durance, seven miserable years, and his treatment during its continuance, as we gather from his own descriptions, such as might be expected from the place and the age. It is impossible to say more.

Shortly after his confinement he must have begun, and before the end of May had completed, his "Discourse to GONZAGA on the events of his Life," a prolix and somewhat florid production, which, did we possess it entire, would probably leave little mystery. Though it did not appear in print until thirty-three years after the poet's death, it was mutilated

by the first publisher, as we have already mentioned, and no inquiry after the original manuscript has as yet been successful.

Significant blanks being all that remain of some portions, once, no doubt, the most interesting, it would be inexcusable to inflict the entire residue on the reader. A selection, therefore, has been made, ample enough, however, to assist his curiosity, perhaps to weary it.\* It begins thus :

“ I know not, most illustrious sir, whether for the purpose of inducing you to undertake my protection, I ought to employ the force of reason or the eloquence of entreaty ; since, if upon the one hand, my miseries cry aloud, resounding so marvellously through the world, that he must be deaf who will not hear, and he who

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\* Serassi makes only a few extracts from this Discourse, and Black, in two quarto volumes, finds room but for a meagre abstract of its contents, calling it exceedingly prolix and full of irrelevant matter. Rosini was, of course, precluded by his limits from doing more than quoting such parts as were favorable to his argument. In connecting these with other proofs, he has not, perhaps, always avoided the error of assuming too much.

will not pity, inhuman; on the other hand, your intellect is so acute, that you can, without assistance, not only discover all the arguments in defence of the accused, but penetrating further into the very nature of errors and of crimes, the just proportion of rewards and punishments, and the duties of justice and humanity; you can perceive what is due to me after so many afflictions, from those who, being in this world the ministers of God and of his divine justice and clemency, ought to be his imitators. If, then, my miseries are of themselves worthy to be heard, and you of yourself are capable of perceiving whatever either justice or mercy can urge in my favor, it is superfluous, perhaps, that you should be wearied either with my prayers or my arguments, especially, since by one or the other I seek to persuade you of that to which, if you have not been already persuaded by your own bounty and courtesy, neither can you be moved by my tears nor convinced by my reasoning, since the first can tell you nothing new of my griefs, nor the last reveal any truth not already known to you. And possibly, therefore, it would be better if I should rely on a modest and melancholy silence, to

effect the object which I do not believe mere words can accomplish. But, having found by experience that silence has not availed me more than speech, I will not be deterred by fatigue or peril, after the loss of comfort, quiet, content, reputation, honor, liberty, and almost of life, (for I hardly live,) from risking words in attempting to recover some part of what I have lost. I address myself to you then, and rather with arguments than entreaties, knowing you to be even more rational than affectionate, your well-disciplined mind having retained so much tenderness and no more, as may serve by kindness and humanity to adorn without disturbing the empire of reason.

And I will speak to you, not as it is customary to address the ignorant, nor yet judges and senators, more habituated to action than contemplation, but as one perfectly philosophical should be spoken to by him, who, if he understands not, at least admires and loves philosophy.

All that I am accused of, most illustrious sir, and on account of which I have fallen into this wretched condition, may be reduced to two heads. Whenever man sins he sins against

God; because God, being every where and in all things, he can wrong nothing without injuring one of God's works. But there are two ways in which God may be offended; either directly, that is by crimes against his divine majesty, or indirectly, by such as are committed against his creatures. The latter, also, admit of a twofold division, into transgressions that act on the persons of our neighbors, as homicide, adultery, treason, and the like, and those that stop with the person who commits them, such as simple acts of incontinence or intemperance, absolute or qualified; vain and idle thoughts, and, to use the words of the poet,

*"Luxurious food, and sloth, and downy sleep."*

But, among the offences committed against our neighbors, most grave are those touching the dignity of princes, which may be likened, in some degree, to those rebelliously directed against God by the pride and impiety of man; because princes on earth are God's images and ministers. Such, then, being the variety of sins, I, through my fault, and partly through my misfortune, am accused or calumniated with some

of them. Because it must be either as a rebel against the Duke, my lord by election, or as criminal towards my friends and acquaintances, or unjust to myself, (if against one's self injustice can be committed,) that I am thus treated; — banished from the citizenship, not of Naples only, or Ferrara, but of the whole earth; so that, for me, it is not lawful to say what is lawful for every one else, that I am a citizen of the world — excluded not only from the pale of civil, but of national law, and the laws of nature and of God — deprived of all friendship, and intercourse, and conversation, and knowledge — of all amusements and comforts — denied all favors, and in all places and at all times, equally scorned and abominated. A punishment so great, that, unaccompanied with hope, death itself could not be greater, and, perhaps, by a man of courage and magnanimity, qualities to which I pretend not, might be esteemed far less. But if this hope be not the promise of good to come, but deceitful consolation, such as is given to the incurable, I cannot decide whether it be a mitigation or an increase of my sufferings, since I must witness



from hour to hour the destruction of some illusion that seemed about to be fulfilled."

TASSO, after a rhetorical digression describing the Greek punishment of parricides, and comparing his own with it, proceeds :

" But comparisons, you will say, are not readily equalized in the balance, and I confess it. Nor from the goodness of the prince, in whose power I am, can any cruel punishment be anticipated ; nor from his kind and clement disposition any tyrannous invention ; and that which I now suffer, be it what it may, is perhaps rather deserved by me, than worthy of him, the work, so to speak, of my fortune, brought about by many incidental causes, marvellously concurring to my prejudice, and beginning when he thought rather of favoring, than punishing me.

" But neither have I committed parricide, nor was there ever any one once manifestly absolved by the judgment of God, and afterwards, for the same cause, unjustly condemned by the judgment of men. He who killed his mother, when his absolution was pronounced

by Apollo, ceased to be pursued by his countrymen; yet I, who by the judgment, not of Apollo, but of the true and all-powerful God, (may I dare to say so,) against the will and opinion of all my fellows, have been miraculously rescued from the jaws of death — once, twice, and three times ready to devour me — why am I anew persecuted of men? Is it not enough, if my crimes are so heavy as they would have them, that like a new ORESTES I should be tormented by remorse of conscience and loss of reputation? And if they be not so heavy, but that they may be punished of themselves, why is a penalty renewed, certainly not slight, nor customary, nor used, nor heard of, nor imagined ever? But the crime of Orestes was one, and yours are many, it will be said, and he killed his mother to revenge his father, but you, by what cause were your offences instigated? And here occurs the necessity for me to speak of myself, and of my faults, not indeed without humiliation, but boldly and frankly; and if I shrink not from the exposure of my shame, neither should you find its confession tiresome; but if you will not listen with clemency as a friend to his friend,

or a lord to his servant, at least as man to man, sinner to sinner, and the subject of fortune ; to one most unfortunate, with some feeling of humanity, you must deign to listen to me !

“ The bitterest accusers pass over the faults of boyhood and of youth, especially such as not being directed against God, and only slightly injurious to man, end, for the most part, with him who commits them. But my enemies, like swine, delighting to root and wallow in the mire of my iniquity, if free of uncleanness themselves, as I am willing to believe, have at least been incontinent in hatred, if not in severity. But if of such, or the like faults, they have themselves been guilty, which I do not affirm, let them not imagine I will pry into the secrets of their youth, if that were possible. They will allow me only to say, that most inconsiderately have they used such harshness, if conscious of liability to reproof ; but fortunately for them they have used it against a person who cannot, or will not, or ought not to retaliate, returning like for like, though the Pythagoreans esteemed that the only sort of justice. But as I, so God will bear me witness, desire no other revenge of them than such as

by living, and by writing well, I can inflict, if indeed this will mortify them, so I confess that not without many faults of mine have I fallen into this wretchedness. Yet, if it was the weakness of youth, and of human nature, to err, certainly it was owing to the malignity of fortune, that when my life began to reform, and my fair fame to spread abroad, which I, by well-doing, might have hoped daily to increase, all my honor was turned into disgrace, and my manhood tarnished and degraded by faults not its own.

“ But whatever may be the present charges against me, for I know not precisely what they are — unless my conscience is greatly deceitful, they are such as rather merit pardon and oblivion than remembrance and punishment. My other errors also are rather numerous than heavy, according to the opinions of men ; and if any one in my favor would imitate Christ, when he said let him that is without sin cast the first stone, silence would be imposed on the murmurers, or rather criers and proclaimers of my dishonor ; and if nothing new could be added, the rumors of my juvenile faults, revived with such infinite pains and curious dili-

gence by my enemies, would soon return to rest.

“ But the accusation of being faithless to my prince, added to the original charges,\* produced a torrent, nay, a deluge of misfortunes, so great that neither any effort of human reason, nor the favor of the most serene PRINCESSES, who exerted themselves earnestly in my behalf, were capable of restraining it. And what shall I answer to these grave accusations? What testimony can I produce in my favor? Your’s, my lord, I fancy would relieve me in part, if not entirely from the burthen of the infamy, or at least greatly reduce it.”

TASSO, with reference doubtless to the heretical opinions of which he was suspected, and which probably are the “original charges” alluded to above, enters into a long argument upon free will, and maintains that it is no justification of incredulity to say our belief does not depend upon ourselves. This may be spared. But his eloquent apostrophe to the

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\* Probably of heresy.

Divine Being, and account of the final re-establishment of his faith, and restoration of his tranquillity, notwithstanding their length, are too important to be omitted.

“ I do not, then, O LORD ! excuse, but accuse myself, that, utterly unclean within and without, and infected with the sins of the flesh, and filth of the world, I was accustomed to think of thee, as of the ideas of Plato, the atoms of Democritus, the spirit of Anaxagoras, the enmity and friendship of Empedocles, the primeval matter of Aristotle, the forms of body and unity of mind dreamed of by Averröes, and such like theories of philosophers, which, for the most part, are figments of their own imaginations, rather than works of thine, or of nature, thy minister.

“ Nor is it marvellous, therefore, that I knew thee only as the first cause of the universe, beloved and desired, and drawing all things to thyself ; the eternal and immovable principle of all motion ; the Lord of the world, ever watchful over it, and all that it contains. But I doubted overmuch whether thou hadst created the world, or it had depended on thee from

all eternity; and I doubted whether thou hadst endowed man with an immortal soul; and whether thou hadst descended to invest thyself with humanity; and many other things which flow from these like streams from their source. For how could I firmly believe in the sacraments, or in the authority of the pope, or in hell, or purgatory, if I doubted the incarnation of thy Son and the immortality of the soul? The second doubts, however, did not spring from their own proper roots, but rather branched off from the first. For I grieved to doubt, and willingly would I have banished such thoughts from my mind, curious and delighting in lofty and abstract speculations; and willingly would I have reposed on the belief of all that is held and taught of thee by the holy Roman Catholic Church. But this, O Lord! I desired less for the love I bore thee and thine infinite goodness, than a certain slavish dread of hell; and often did the angelic trump of the last day sound horribly in my ears; and I fancied I saw thee seated on the clouds, and heard the words of fear, "*Begone, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!*" So strong were these thoughts in me, that I was oftentimes

obliged to reveal them to some friend or acquaintance, and overcome by my apprehensions I confessed and communicated, at the seasons and in the manner commanded by the church ; and if at any time I omitted any sin in confession, from shame at having acted so badly in trifles, or from negligence, I repeated my confession, and often made it general of all my sins.

“ In revealing my doubts to my confessor, however, I did not exhibit them with as much force as I felt them in my soul, (because I was sometimes on the brink of disbelief,) not so much from shame or wickedness, as from fear he would not absolve me. And among my doubts, the principal one which I could not resolve was, whether mine was infidelity or not, and whether or no I could be absolved. Nevertheless I consoled myself by believing, and that more firmly than anything else, that thou wouldst pardon even those who had not believed in thee, provided their incredulity had not proceeded from obstinacy and wickedness, of which sins I am acquitted by my conscience, and thou knowest they are, and ever have been, far from me. For thou knowest I ever



desired most fervently the exaltation of thy faith, although not believed, or not entirely believed by me ; and I desired, with a zeal more worldly perhaps than spiritual, but still most ardent, that the seat of thy faith, and of the pontificate in Rome, should continue to the end of ages ; and thou knowest that the names of Lutheran and heretic were abhorred and abominated by me ; although I did not always refrain from the intimacy and conversation of those, who, from reasons of state, as they said, vacillated in thy faith, and were sometimes near scepticism. And thou knowest, if I spoke to any one of my doubts, it was not to infect them, but to relieve my own mind from a weight that at times overwhelmed it ; and thou knowest, that when thy chastisements fell upon me in the most sensitive part of my nature, I mean my honor and reputation, I did not fly from, but drew nigh unto thee ; and the coldness of my heart, if it heated not, at least warmed in thy love. And although it is said the lukewarm are worse than the frozen, that, peradventure, is only true of those who content themselves in their lukewarmness, not of such as, seeking to increase their zeal, may reason-

ably hope for an augmentation of thy grace. For thou dost not always miraculously enlighten and inflame man with thy love, as thou didst Paul, but sometimes workest by ordinary means, as thou didst with Cyprian, who, to enjoy his beloved maiden, turned Christian, thus reaching from earthly to divine affections; and moreover, if I mistake not, it is impossible to pass from coldness to heat without going through lukewarmness. Nor did I therewith content myself, though, mixed with the tepid desire of thy grace, was a most ardent desire of earthly honor and glory. But I rejoiced that the fervor of concupiscence and sensuality was almost extinguished in me; nor, to confess the truth, did I grieve to be ambitious, having read in Cornelius Tacitus, that ambition is the last garment a wise man leaves off. Such was I in love towards thee; and by means of frequent attendance on holy ceremonies, and daily prayers, in this state I continued, and even advanced, becoming stronger in my faith from day to day; and thus thinking of thee, not indeed as I ought, but in a better manner than I had done, my mind began to presume less upon itself than formerly, and clearly to

perceive by experience, that it obeyed the will, at least when exercising itself in obedience to thee ; and that being habituated to profitable reflections and holy thoughts, it would be rendered worthy to receive faith as the gift of God, of which it may be truly said, it is an act of the understanding, commanded by the will.

“And already, in great part, I laughed at my former doubts, not because I could solve them, or say what thou wert, or understand thy nature and essence, but because I was aware thou wert incomprehensible, and that it was folly to attempt confining thee, who art infinite, within the narrow limits of the human intellect, or measuring, with human reason, thy immeasurable goodness, justice, and omnipotence.”

## CHAPTER II.

ENTERING still farther into details, he recounts the confirmation of his faith touching certain points of Christian and Catholic doctrine, whereof he had doubted, more circumstantially, perhaps, than would be acceptable to a majority of our readers. The purpose here to be effected is not to ascertain by what theological arguments Tasso's skepticism was removed, but whether his religious doubts had at all impaired his reason.

"Such," says he, concluding this branch of his subject, "were the trains of thought and argument I perceived in my own mind; by means of which I became continually more and more aware of the uncertainty of earthly science, and less and less inclined to listen to whatever may be urged by philosophy against our reli-

gion; so that I was not at all, or very slightly agitated by my former anxieties.

“But it is time, most illustrious sir, that I return to you after this long digression into which I have been led, not, indeed, against my will, but without my purpose, and moved by no artifice of oratory but by a certain spirit of truth.”

Here follows in the original edition a blank of several lines.\* From what succeeds it may

\* These passages were suppressed, by the first publisher, as appears from the *Imprimatur* at the end of the volume:

“Ho letto e copiata, io Martino Sandelli Dottore dell' una, e l' altra legge, e Rettore in San Martino di Padoua, il sopra scritto discorso del' Signor Torquato Tasso; ne in esso hò ritrovato cosa contraria alla Santa Fede Catholica, *alli Principi ò buoni costumi (eccettuate alcune cose cancellate à maggior cautela)* anzi per la molta pietà et eccellente dottrina in detto discorso contenuta lo stimo dignissimo delle stampe.

Di Casa il dì 6 di Suglio, 1628.

Il Medesimo.

Fr. Io. Paulus Sans, Vice Generalis, Sancti Officij Paduæ.  
Per Stamparsi.—Gio. Rizzardo Segretario dell' Excellentissimo Senato.”

In all that concerns Tasso's faith the Discourse appears to be perfect. The passages *cancelled* for greater caution, therefore, must be *offensive to good morals* or to *some prince*.

The Discourse was first printed in 1629, by Martini, in

be deduced, that the commencement of the paragraph referred to the person who had denounced him to the inquisition.

. . . . . "But since it would please me to take everything in good part, let him purge his conscience in the sight of God, and justify his deeds in the judgment of men, and I, for my part, will be satisfied. I say then, that as it is possible for an action to be just in itself, and yet unjustly done, and he wicked who does it; so, on the other hand, an evil deed may be done by one who is not bad, since vice, like virtue, consists in habit, which exhibits itself principally in the manner or the circumstances.

"Thus, if one for the lucre of gain, or ambition, or envy, tell the truth or do any other good thing, and another from shame, or well-founded fear, or other necessity, deny it, or work other iniquity." . . . . .

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4to. The original MS., from which Sandelli copied, has escaped all research. Rosini saggio sugli Amori di T. Tasso, p. 83.

Here follows another blank.\* It may be supplied, perhaps, by supposing that Tasso, in conformity with his argument, blames the first act because done from a bad motive, and excuses the second, inasmuch as the purpose was not evil, or the temptation almost irresistible.

. . . . "And this," continues the discourse, "is the doctrine to be so plainly and clearly gathered from Aristotle and all who have philosophized about it, that there remains little doubt." . . . . .

Another blank occurs.†

. . . . . "Whence, if in the tribunals of justice were seated, not the rigid executors of written law, but the correctors of its severity, the interpreters of the legislator's will, and imitators of divine justice, the condemned would sometimes be acquitted and the acquitted condemned. But if such manner of judg-

\* Marked in Martini's edition by a space indicating two lines.

† One line.

ment and interpretation belongs not to ordinary judges, at least it belongs to princes, who are themselves living and animated laws. Let the ordinary tribunals, then, follow the common method, provided that princes be not denied, or, rather, that they who can do everything do not deny themselves, or think it unbecoming of their greatness to follow the other. But, peradventure, this sound argument is as superfluous, as it is false that my friend was led by any evil intention to act against me. Yet, if it will not avail me to inculcate him, (nor do I desire it should so avail me,) at least it will not be useless to exculpate some of my own actions from disgrace, and to place in consideration that it is not enough things should be just in themselves, if they be not justly done. For, when I was apprised that he accused me, I thought I perceived (perhaps I was mistaken) that to fortify his accusations I was proceeded against in a manner neither just, legitimate, nor usual; and thence it appeared to me, if the means taken for my inculpation were extraordinary, it was not unreasonable I should use extraordinary means to exculpate myself, even denying what was true, because I imagined



they sought to convict me of what was false ; and I spoke of it to the most serene Duke of Ferrara, my loving and beloved lord, and with his leave presented myself. But in the examination, truly, I allowed myself to be greatly transported, not only by feeling but fancy, because I affirmed some things which I firmly believed to be true, but did not know to be so, and in particular, sought to render suspected of evil an excellent person whom I had never known to do anything unjust.

“But if the means used by me were not usual, neither were the proceedings of the judge ; and if he excuses himself by the singularity of the case, how can he be excused before God or a wise prince for doing nothing towards my quiet ? And, if he wished to punish me, he ought to have enabled me to depart without fear of my life, at least, not have hindered my departure, when I was about taking horse for Bologna ; but, as he is a man of just and exemplary character, it must be supposed he was moved by just and powerful reasons to withhold his favor from me.

“But let me be allowed, if not to complain of him, at all events, to lament my fortune,

which, if it cannot deprive the just of justice, takes providence from the prudent, sincerity from the sincere, and pity from the merciful; and gives to falsehood on the lips of the true full credence and authority, taking all belief from truth on mine, and all weight from whatever qualities I have worthy of esteem. From this fount flowed a thousand streams, nay a thousand most rapid torrents of misfortune, shame, and wretchedness, greater, peradventure, than were ever suffered. Whence every one . . .  
 . . .\* ought to regard my case with eyes of mercy and of equity, and if they would aggravate my fault by the others with which I am accused, they ought to alleviate it as much or more by a consideration of the circumstances. For the accusers, the judge, the causes of the accusation, and the mode of judging, were of such weight that being placed in the scale against my errors, they might make the latter seem rather light than otherwise; and if to these considerations were added the ills that have befallen me and the grievous injuries I have suffered, they could only be overbalanced by

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\* Blank of half a line in the original edition.

such crimes as are exaggerated in tragedy to strike terror in the multitude.

“ Nor will I now so much consider the nature of sin, (which being a turning away of the affections from infinite goodness to created objects, might appear deserving of every punishment,) as its effects and consequences; since legislators, in adapting penalties to crimes, consider them as more or less hurtful to the commonwealth, and consequently not the greatest virtues are rewarded, but the most useful to the prince or state; . . . . . \*  
 or the consequences which proceed from anger or violent agitation of spirit, but those that arise from perverseness of disposition, and are wont to be deliberately cherished in the mind, and, by evil counsels and premeditated frauds, studiously matured and brought forth. Of which like vices and faults, I know myself to be so clear, that, though I were taxed with all others, I might hope easily to excuse myself, being guiltless of the greatest and most hateful to mankind. And if among the Gentiles expiation was in use, particularly in cases the most unfor-

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\* Blank in the original edition.

tunate and miserable, like that recounted by Herodotus, of him who, after his first misdeed, being courteously received by Cræsus, king of Lydia, killed his son in hunting, by accident ; among Christians, whose peculiar virtue should be mercy, I know not why the same, or a like sort of expiation, might not be used, although, perhaps, sufficiently absolved remains he. . . .  
 . . . \* But I do not refuse to receive this penalty, although I lament that unwonted severity is used against me, and new modes of punishment imagined, . . . . . † and I grieve that those who ought to alleviate my misery, or at least console it, should minister to its rigor, and become aiders of its bitterness, . . . . . ‡ and hard does it seem to me, . . . . . § and if they contained anything lascivious, like tares among the wheat, it is known I intended to remove it.” . . . . . ||

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\* Blank in the original edition.

† Id.

‡ Id.

§ Id.

|| Id.

“Nor should these new errors of mine, since my last flight from Ferrara, be imputed to me, because he who wishes another to be mad ought not to complain if, from desperation at not being able to do what is impossible, and from confusion of mind, and the agitation of a thousand hopes and a thousand fears, he cannot put bounds or method to his madness. And never was there a criminal tormented, nor a besieged city assailed, by as many instruments as have assailed and tormented me. Nor can it be said that I departed from my honest purpose, but rather that I was forced and driven from it.

. . . . . \*

“It remains, then, that I reply to the imputation of being a bad and faithless servant to the Duke, my lord, who for the loftiness of his rank, and the splendor of his court, but more for endowments of body and of mind, and for his liberal and courteous nature, is worthy to be served with all faith and love, and more especially by me. Because, from the obscurity of my humble fortune, he raised me to light and courtly reputation, relieved me from

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\* Blank in the original edition.

sordid cares, and made my life comfortable. He gave value to my productions by hearing them often and kindly, and by honoring me who read them, with every mark of favor, condescending to think me worthy of his table and intimate conversation, denying me no request, and finally, in the beginning of my misfortunes, showing me the affection, not of a master, but a brother, an affection rarely found in the bosoms of the great. How then could I excuse myself for failing in the service of so noble, puissant, courteous, and bountiful a lord? if not by throwing the blame on the faults of others, the malignity of my own fortune, and necessity, which is the tyrant of man, leaving my will not only excused, but purified from all wrong, or suspicion of wrong? I will say more; that if I had ever harbored a design against his life, his state, or his honor, I should deserve not merely the ordinary punishments, or even those inflicted on me, but whatever else more cruel, Phalaris or Mezentius could have invented. But in fine, I offended him only by a few light words, the like of which are often uttered by discontented courtiers, or by treating for a change of service from the

necessity of the case, which he may hear from me if he will, and in the manner known to you, most illustrious sir, wherein I do not believe he can think himself aggrieved; and with words that might have been of much importance, if not said conditionally, but which, moreover, were uttered in a transport of just anger, not against him, but against one who had given me sufficient cause, and they were spoken with an intention that they should not have effect, as the sequel shows, and in terms so restricted that it was easy to perceive I had no purpose to remain in his service with a view to his injury, but rather that I sought to go elsewhere, so as not to be obliged to say or do anything that might displease him.

“ And here I should like to recount fully my various misadventures, and how they happened, by which means my good intentions and evil fortune would be clearly perceived; but as it is not my purpose to increase the irritation against me, I will suppress my reasons, not to mix them with others’ faults; nor do I dread defrauding myself of a just defence, hoping that your acuteness, illustrious sir, and the bounty of my serene lords, will supply the de-

fect of my silence, and permit that, without the aid of my pen, TRUTH shall cry aloud so powerfully, as not only to be heard by the present generation, but to pass down to all future ages.

“ Nevertheless, I will not deny that my lord, who did not know the secrets of my heart, may have been moved by some of my follies, and the authority of most grave witnesses, very justly to punish me. But the chastisement which his clemency, governed by the mercy of God, forbore to inflict, afterwards reached me from others, in a way which makes all that has since been practised against me pass the bounds of punishment, and take the form and nature of revenge. Yet, whether this can be revenge, and whether revenge on so humble an object can be the work of such high princes, I suggest, with the utmost reverence for your consideration, not to offend them, whom I most earnestly desire to honor, nor to instruct you, from whom I might rather learn, but that these my arguments may be strengthened by you, and passing, through means of your favor, may humbly present themselves to their highnesses, like winds that, wafted over flowers, become



odoriferous, or waters that in aqueducts are sweetened and purified."

TASSO here enters into a train of reasoning, the purport of which is, that the same act may be either correction, punishment, or vengeance, according as it is intended to reform the evil-doer, secure the public safety, or satisfy individual revenge. He then continues :

" I ask of you now, illustrious sir, if these princes intend to reform me, to punish me, or to revenge themselves upon me ? If to amend me, they are merciful ; if to punish me, just ; if to revenge themselves, angry. I desire purgation ; I do not refuse punishment ; but from revenge I would escape as far as I have power, shielding myself under the protection of their friends and relations, and entreating and supplicating heaven and earth to help me."

He proceeds to consider these three heads, and with respect to the first, insists that the correction inflicted by good judges for the reform of an offender, resembles the medicine administered by good physicians to the sick,

which causes short and salutary pain, not lingering and unprofitable suffering. When the moral part of our nature is to be corrected, the intellectual must not be allowed to languish, but shame and remorse of conscience must be made incentives to future well-doing, and to the recovery of lost honor ; and these, he adds, were the means pursued by the ancient captains, for the correction of soldiers who broke their ranks or turned their back on the enemy.

“ But, perhaps,” he continues, “ it is not the business of the patient to prescribe the mode of cure to the physician, and I who am sick enough in body and in mind, should do nothing more than tell him my complaints. Yet I complain not that my heart is troubled with almost continual pain, nor that my head is always heavy, and often aching, and my sight and hearing weakened, and all my limbs meager and attenuated, but passing over all these with a brief sigh, I will enumerate the infirmities of the mind. And especially I must say, that he who delights in honor can never get well unless honor be restored to him ; nor can he ever believe it re-acquired, unless he perceive some

sign of its restitution ; for honor is the sign of esteem, if we believe Aristotle, or the reward of virtue, as is elsewhere said by the same author, and this reward consists in some external mark ; for a mute opinion, manifested by no act, cannot be called honor. But if no other sign can be given me, at least I ought to perceive that of being admitted to the society of princes, and the conversation of nobles, in the same manner as formerly. For if my treatment continues as it has begun, and I am obliged to go on in the same way as at present, how can I ever believe that I am restored to honor ? And if honor is among the greatest delights, what pleasure can I take in those demonstrations which never reach me, and cannot console me, unless it be the pleasure of a sick man's dream ? . . . . .

“ But pass we from purgation to punishment. The penalty should, without doubt, be proportioned to the offence ; but whether I have been already sufficiently punished or not, I remit to the merciful consideration of those princes who have the power to judge me ; and if I have not been fully punished, restraint, banishment, exclusion from the halls of princes, are perhaps

adequate punishments, especially after the first, which struck me so cruelly in life, honor, and repose ; and if these, being ordinary penalties, do not content them, because they are eager for novelty — to be compelled to understand by signs, like a mute or a beast, separated from all knowledge of the things of the world, forbidden all action, interdicted all private conversation and intercourse, denied the mutual faith of friendship, and deprived of every object agreeable to the sight, the smell, or the taste — these surely are punishments enough, without adding to so many miseries sickness, and beggary, and insult, and the prohibition of writing.

“ I will say, moreover, that the principal action with which I am charged, and which, peradventure, is the only occasion of my chastisement, ought not to be punished as absolutely bad, but rather mixed, because I did it not from choice, but necessity, (not indeed absolute, but conditional,) and from fear now of death, now of flagrant shame, and now of miserable and perpetual disquiet.\* . . . .

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\* A passage respecting Aristotle's division of mixed actions is omitted.

Nor do I judge less deserving of pardon the words that I uttered, seeing that they were spoken by a man not only angry, but excessively enraged."

He then goes on to argue that they ought to be pardoned, because anger is less culpable than premeditated malice, and often where there is most anger there is most love. And he affirms, that in loving his prince, and desiring his grandeur and felicity, and in affection to his friends, and in promoting their good, as far as lay in his power, he found few equals, and no return. "If God," he says, "pardons a thousand blasphemies of sinners, princes may forgive a few words against them; and Cæsar not only pardoned offensive language, but forgave the stigma of perpetual infamy he received from Catullus, and Suetonius affirms, if I remember rightly, that he invited him that evening, or the evening afterwards to supper."

He then admits, that as crimes committed in anger are offences, nevertheless, it is not unreasonable that they should be punished, but

contends that the punishment should be moderate, and adapted to the nature of the crime.

“But,” he continues, “to impose as a penalty upon an artisan, that he shall not practise his art, is certainly unexampled ; because, by so doing, neither is the majesty of the law maintained, nor does any honor to the prince nor any benefit to the state accrue from it ; nay, on the contrary, the punishment is alike injurious to the world, and to him that suffers it. And so far are the laws from imposing such a penalty, that they incline rather to spare the life of one who excels in his art, although guilty of grave offences, and willingly permit their own rigor to be mitigated sooner than lose an extraordinary man, or any admirable work. Thus Augustus declares, in the verses with which he saved the *Æneid* of Virgil from the flames :

‘ *Frangatur potius legum veneranda potestas  
Quam tot congestos nocteque dieque labores.*’ ”

Tasso then enumerates a number of instances in which authors were forbidden to write, or their works prohibited ; as those of Livy and Virgil,

by Caligula ; those of Gregory Nazianzen and Basil, by Julian, etc. " But, perhaps," he continues, " this long argument is out of place, as neither do I desire to be classed with such excellent writers, nor was the design of my lord, like that of those wicked emperors, he being, if ever prince was, a skilful judge, and liberal rewarder of noble arts and artists, and desirous as well of performing deeds worthy of honorable fame, as of promoting those studies by which the memory of noble acts is adorned and perpetuated. But he wished, perhaps, to exercise my patience, or to make proof of my faith, and to see me humbled in those points from which he knew something of my pride proceeded, intending to remove this hard prohibition as soon as he thought my humility deserved it." . . . . . \*

" But I, little obedient in disregarding the signs of his will, and still more incontinent in complaining that so hard a law was imposed upon me, departed, not driven away, but voluntarily, from Ferrara, a city not my birth-

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\* Some comparisons of no importance to the sense are omitted.

place, indeed, but my place of second birth, whither I have returned, not forced by want alone, but induced by my intense desire to kiss the hands of his highness, and to recover, on the occasion of these nuptials, some part of his grace."

TASSO then proceeds to say that although he perceives no sign that ALPHONSO will either receive him again into his service or allow him to serve the Prince of MANTUA,\* he thinks the

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\* Vincenzo Gonzaga, to whom Tasso appears to have been attached on account of the kindness shown him in his passage through Mantua after his second flight. See Letter to the Duke of Urbino. Vincenzo visited him in prison, and TASSO seems always to have relied on his exertions to liberate him, apparently not without reason, since it was to the Prince of MANTUA that the Duke of FERRARA ultimately consented to deliver the poet on condition that he should be well guarded, (see Serassi, 382,) and not allowed to leave his dominions. See Lettere, tom. ii., 26, 54, 57, 59, 228, 229, also Serassi, 380. In a letter, tom. ii., p. 66, he says, he is allowed to go through Mantua with a servant but not to leave the country.

BLACK gives this among the proofs of his madness, but a more careful examination of all the letters referring to this subject will show, that TASSO was in fact given in ward to the Prince of MANTUA, and upon a pledge that he was not to go out of his power. See also Lettere, tom. ii., 350, 351, 216; tom. iii., 235; tom. iv., 69, 185, and tom. i., p. 124, and especially tom. ii., 26, 54, 66. Vide also Serassi, Vita, 369.



DUKE might extend to him courtesy enough, notwithstanding his licentious words, to let him kiss his hand ; and "I hope," he continues, "if of this favor he was not sparing, of others, also, he ought not to be avaricious, among which, what I most desire, is to be allowed to write without impediment. And what forbids your writing? you will ask me. Nothing now forbids me, nor did anything forbid me when I departed ; but many things prevented me then, and now no hinderance is removed."

His explanation of the nature of these impediments is somewhat prolix. The substance is this. An act itself is hindered by obstructing its object. The object of the artist is to derive fame and profit from his works ; of the orator, to make orations ; and of the poet, to leave poems. "But to me," he continues, "all the civil occupations of man being interdicted, and all opportunity of exercising eloquence, if I have any, it remains only that I propose to myself the end of leaving works, and if this is denied, it follows, inevitably, that I should withdraw myself from vain and fruitless labor."

Arguing, then, that honor is the nurse of art, he insists on the impossibility of his composing without receiving some mark of kindness. The direct end of the artist is his work, but the incidental, and sometimes the most important one to him, its rewards; but for his own part, it is impossible to say whether, in the state to which he has been reduced, the one purpose or the other is most impeded. "For the mind," says he, "shows itself dull to think, the fancy sluggish to imagine, the senses heavy in ministering to the imagination, the hand slow to write, the pen forgetful of its office, and all my faculties chilled, stunned, stupified, and overwhelmed."

After again reverting to his wish of serving the Prince of MANTUA, he insists on the hardship of punishing him while those who injured him were unpunished.

"It is known to you, most illustrious sir," says he, "that if by me; any one at any time was offended, infinitely numerous are those by whom I have been most iniquitously wronged to my irreparable injury; yet, whilst I am pun-

ished for my faults, their wrongs against me escape with impunity."

Reasoning at length respecting this injustice, he sums up the division of his subject relative to punishment thus:

"Collecting together what I have said on the topic of chastisement, it appears to me my errors were worthy of pardon ; still, nevertheless, up to this time, they have received punishment, and it seems to me, if new punishments are to be inflicted, they might be satisfied with fewer and lighter ones ; and in consideration of the pardon which I give to my enemies, might regard my own faults with greater clemency."

"But perhaps," he continues, "the serene Princes intend not to punish but to revenge themselves upon me :

. . . 'tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ ?'

God forbid that such a wish should ever have a place in their minds or such a thought in mine ; for, as the wish would be unworthy of their

greatness, so ought I to think them incapable of it."

He argues that anger and the desire of revenge belong to equals. Achilles was enraged, but it was with Hector and Agamemnon. Turnus was enraged, but it was with Æneas. Rage and vengeance should have no place from a prince to a subject. After digressing to entreat the favor of the pope and the cardinals, from whom all the offices of Christian charity might be expected, Tasso concludes his discourse with an earnest and pathetic appeal to GONZAGA, conjuring him by the mutual friendship of their youth, the memory of past benefits and gratitude, the greatness of his friend's mind, and the heaviness of his own misfortunes, and by every other topic of affectionate entreaty he can use, to have pity on and intercede for him, as well with the lords of ESTE as with other princes and sovereigns.

Parts of this composition, even thus abridged, it is to be feared have proved tedious to some of our readers. But, on a question so grave and so difficult as the madness or sanity of

TASSO, it would be inexcusable to slur over any material portion of the evidence.

After collecting such additional important facts as his prose writings afford touching this most perplexed and perplexing question, if the interest of our subject do not increase, the manner of treating it may at least be varied, for it will then be admissible to relieve and diversify the dryness of our inquiries, by apt quotations from the "*RIME EROICHE e MORALE.*" With this promise our readers' patience may be entreated yet a little longer.

The Discourse to Gonzaga was succeeded by a letter to his friend, bearing date, "from the prison of Sant' Anna in the month of May, 1579."

"If, by what I first wrote," he commences, "I effected nothing else, I shook off my own timidity and habituated myself to argue freely, and you to listen with patience and attention."

He proceeds to assign many reasons why SCIPIO should intercede for him, and reminding him of the love they formerly bore each other, he adds: "But now, if you are such, and so

disposed to me no more, at least you cannot deny knowing me well, and being in part the cause of my misfortunes.”\*

Taking it for granted that the PRINCES of ESTE are greatly incensed with him, he says, many motives should urge them to clemency ; and he adduces several instances of its being extended to more serious offences. He reminds GONZAGA that ALPHONSO I. magnanimously pardoned those who sought to take away his life ; and HERCULES, his son, forgave SCIPIO’s uncle, who without provocation intended to kill him ; and also the soldiers who came to Ferrara in time of war with the like design. He argues that his friend, in not undertaking his protection, will disable his own judgment, since no one knew men better, or had loved him more.

“ And who,” he continues, “ is more frank and open in conversation than myself ? Perhaps if I had not been so I might have avoided this misery. But there is not, nor ever was, in

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\* Doubtless alluding to his having attempted to draw him into the service of the MEDICI.

my mind, many secrets or concealments, but ever on my brow, and on my tongue, satisfaction as plainly as discontent, and anger as well as love are wont to manifest themselves. And if, so to speak, there was in my soul any cavern or labyrinth in which I hid part of my troubles, (for I will not deny having always endeavored to conceal my scepticism,) there was also a repository of things more dear than such as are shown to all, which indeed I did not so much discover to you ever, as with a vain familiarity I often hinted their existence."\*

Torquato goes on to say, that however this may be, the same qualities for which he was once held worthy of esteem still exist, and make him deserving of forgiveness, and of SCIPIO's intercession, in despite of the discovery of his imperfections. And if the CARDINAL d' ESTE will not entreat for his pardon, nor the PRINCESSES of FERRARA, as partakers in their brother's injury, and for other reasons displeased

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\* This passage is remarkable.

with him, nor DON ALPHONSO\* for the same cause, nor his sons, and if the MARQUESS† blames his indiscreet return, but cannot, or will not help him, and his old friend the DUKE of URBINO is dissatisfied with him, and the Cardinal ALBANO, and others whom he names, for various reasons abandon him, why should not the PRINCE and DUCHESS of MANTUA, of whom he has never written, or spoken, but with extreme reverence and affection, why should not they intercede for him? “And how,” he proceeds, “can the DUCHESS of FERRARA, daughter of the one, and sister of the other, endure that I should come to celebrate her nuptials with sighs and lamentations, and that the season of mercy should become to me a time of punishment, the opening of other prisons being the signal for closing mine?”

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\* Don Alphonso of Este. TASSO alludes more than once to his supposed displeasure, the cause of which I have not been able to discover. His son, Don Cæsar, on the contrary, always favored the poet.

† The Marquess of Este, who gave TASSO an asylum and protection in Turin, and attempted to dissuade him from returning to Ferrara.



A long enumeration of the inducements princes have to be merciful succeeds, mingled with arguments against such imperfect pardons as are really only a change of punishment, and complaints of his own hard fortune, and the parsimony of the great. He affirms, that between the princes who so rigorously punished, and those who so coldly and scantily favored him, he knows not with whom he has the least reason to be satisfied. "Yet," he continues, "neither do I call the first cruel, nor the last avaricious, but myself doubly unfortunate, who in the abode of mercy and liberality find only rigor and penury." And to be silent about the princes by whom he was punished, "How is it possible," he asks, "that the Duke of Savoy . . . . could ever persuade himself to sell a favor to the wretched, and profit by the mendicity and infirmity of one who, if not innocent, is at least as unfortunate as culpable." . . . . "And how is it possible that the DUKES of URBINO and MANTUA, . . . . most learned princes, can draw good from an author's ill, denying him even the satisfaction of seeing his writings in the hands of men, which is allowed to all, and enjoyed not only

by Ludovico Castelvetro, who died out of the bosom of the church, but by arch-heretics, and sowers of scandal and schism?"

Leaving princes, he directs his attention to priests, and inquires :

" If the Cardinal de' Medici is restrained from interfering in his behalf by respect for his brother,\* what considerations restrain the Cardinal of Este, the free arbiter of his actions? . . . . and what considerations the others?" . . . . " Cannot one be found," he asks, " who, imitating Christ, will chase from the temple the buyers and sellers of my wretched blood?"

Reverting to his friend, " But they will say," he continues, " that you loved me while you thought me good, and now, no longer believing me so, you naturally cast me off from your friendship ; I speak of that friendship by ex-

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\* Francis I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, at that time angry with TASSO, and upon ill terms with his brother, the Cardinal FERDINAND de' MEDICI.

cellence, which may exist between greatness like yours, and humility like mine. Most humane sir, even between those whose friendship is dissolved, either because one rises greatly in rank and worth, or the other becomes, or is discovered to be wicked, there still remain some obligations of kindness and courtesy. Because past intercourse, the interchange of benefits, mutual affection, and former scenes, and conversations, grave and gay, cannot be driven from the memory without cruelty. And Aristotle holds, that when our vices admit of remedy or correction, a true friend ought not to abandon us, or refuse us help and favor—a precept entirely conformable to Christian charity. And it seems to me my disposition is such, that I would now of myself always choose good and reject evil. But I will not affirm I have been seduced into the latter by the hope of ease, and quiet, and health, things dear to men, nor that I have been beguiled by pleasures to which I am naturally very much inclined, because perhaps my opinion may be false. But I will say, that I was driven from good by bitter attacks and dire necessity; for Virtue, who presented herself to the youthful

Hercules, did not show me, as she did him, merely a steep, rugged, and difficult ascent, but struck me with vile and abject indigence, and miserable infirmity. And thence did I turn aside, and incline to follow pleasure, her enemy, returning to my old habits of life, and perhaps worse, tempted by enjoyment certainly, but more terrified by the fear of languishing wretchedly a long time in this hospital, where, to my misfortune, I now find myself; and if some courteous kindness does not reach, and recall me to the better way, I shall not quit the worse while means and opportunity of doing so are wanting, which I would myself go in search of, if I knew how."

"Me miserable! Besides two epic poems on most virtuous and noble arguments, it was my intention to have written four tragedies, the plans of which were already formed, and many useful and excellent prose works, wherein I would have so united philosophy and eloquence, as to leave a glorious and ever-during memory behind me in the world. But now, borne down by so much misery, all thoughts of honor and of fame abandon me. Too happy should I deem myself, if, without suspicion, I might

quench the drought that perpetually torments me, and beneath some humble roof, like any ordinary man, lead a life of freedom, if not well, which I never can be more, at all events not so afflicted by infirmity; if not honored yet not abominated, and, if denied the laws of man, allowed at least those of brutes, who in the streams and at the springs may freely slake their thirst, while I (let me repeat it) am consumed by mine.\* Nor do I dread so much the greatness of the evil, as its duration, which presents itself horribly to my thoughts, more especially as in such circumstances I am unable to apply myself or compose. And my wretchedness is greatly augmented by the fear of perpetual imprisonment, and the indignity to which I must familiarize myself, the squalor of my beard, and hair, and clothes, and the sordid filth and misery around me; but, above all, by solitude, my natural and cruel enemy, which sometimes so distressed me, even in my best days, that I went in search of company at unseasonable hours. And sure I am, that if she who has so little returned my affection beheld

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\* See the canzone to the princesses, post.

my condition and my sorrows, she would have pity on me!" . . . . .

TASSO shortly afterwards, conceding to his friend that he may in a great degree have told the truth, reminds him that, on the other hand, he cannot deny having seriously hurt, when he meant to help him, and rendered his errors almost inevitable by inconsiderate kindness. Hence arises a new claim on his bounty, for the voluntary correction of an involuntary wrong, which the poet entreats Gonzaga to allow, "and leaving all the bitter, to gather, like a bee from flowers, the sweets of each prince's favor, forming therefrom the honey so much longed for, after the gall and wormwood of his melancholy prison."\*

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\* Lettere, tom. iv., p. 320, ed. di Pisa.

## CHAPTER III.

DEPARTING from the strictly chronological order heretofore generally observed, with a view of presenting at once all the most material proofs respecting TASSO's sanity in the early part of his imprisonment, some events otherwise important must be passed over, to which it may be expedient subsequently to return. If it shall appear that he was not mad when first shut up in the hospital of Sant' Anna, these occurrences will find an appropriate place in investigating hereafter the causes of his imprisonment. For the present, therefore, our inquest of lunacy will be prosecuted still a little farther.

About a year after the date of the letter to GONZAGA last quoted, TASSO wrote at great length to his friend the MARQUESS BUONCOMPAGNO, then general of the armies of the church, in explanation of his conduct, and especially of

his religious opinions.\* It would seem that in the interval some correspondence of the poet's with the EMPEROR, and the PRINCES of Germany, had been divulged, which greatly inflamed the suspicions of his heresy, or at all events exposed him to the charge of double dealing. The object of his letter to BUONCOMPAGNO is to relieve himself from these imputations, to affirm the integrity of his faith, and beg the Marquess's interposition with his HOLINESS, the SACRED COLLEGE, and the DUKE of FERRARA. The bare mention of its topics, and its length, will perhaps draw a sigh from the impatient reader, already drugged with Tasso's theology. Yet much of it is "germane to the matter," and may not be omitted. An abridgment, though less tedious, will be drier; but aridity surrounds us, let us hasten our march.†

"Can it be true," he inquires, "that both

\* The Marquess Buoncompagno was a nephew of Pope Gregory XIII., and had shown Tasso many flattering civilities during his visit to Rome in 1575. Serassi, Vita, 210.

† . . . "Sauver l'aridité du sujet par la rapidité de la marche." — *Beaumarchais*.



the Pope and the Emperor unite to exclude him from communion with mankind? Has the rigor of the illustrious Cardinal of ESTE more influence with them than his humble prayers? \* And if the wings of his faith are not strong enough to bear his supplications to the heads of the church and the empire, can they not at least reach the DUKE of FERRARA? But he is sensible he cannot hope favor for the truth until he has purged himself from all suspicion of falsehood, or at least of contradiction, and he will, therefore, attempt to show there was no inconsistency between what he declared to the inquisition, and what he wrote to the Emperor.

“ He said before the holy office at Bologna, that he had entertained philosophical doubts of the immortality of the soul, the creation of the world, and of other things; and that he had believed the infinite mercy of Christ might save those who were unworthy of paradise merely from want of faith. Yet he also confessed he

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\* In the interval between the letter to Gonzaga and to Buoncompagno, (1579, 1580,) Tasso, it seems, became aware, or suspected, that Cardinal d' Este obstructed his liberation. To this opinion he appears, for the most part, to have subsequently adhered.

had inclined to some Lutheran and Jewish opinions. But in writing to the Emperor\* he said he had Judaized, that he did not believe in the authority of the Pope, and in many respects was more disposed to the doctrines of Luther than those of the church. \* These assertions, he says, are reconcileable. He might indeed excuse himself by the fact that his examination before the inquisition in Bologna was very short, and not very careful, and therefore it would not be remarkable if he had omitted something from inadvertence, or defect of memory, or fear, or shame. But he has a better defence, and it is this. There is no contradiction in what he said. Before the holy office he spoke of the form of his faith, and

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\* I have attempted to obtain a copy of Tasso's letter or memorial to the Emperor. Search has been made for the original among the archives at Vienna, but thus far in vain. To Baron VON HAMMER PURGSTALL, the distinguished orientalist and scholar, I am greatly indebted for his kind exertions to favor my inquiries, and cannot permit this opportunity of returning him my grateful acknowledgments to escape me. To Mr. SCHWARZ, the American consul at Vienna, who was obliging enough to interest himself in them also, I confess my obligations with pleasure.

therefore did not say he was either a Jew or a Lutheran. In writing to the Emperor he spoke of the substance of his opinions, as that God might save just unbelievers, that the Pope could not liberate souls from purgatory, etc. Thus as his doubts had arisen from the writings of philosophers, not the arguments of heretics, or comments on the Scriptures, it could not be said he was either Lutheran or Jew. Yet as his opinions in many respects resembled those of both, it was not wrong that in writing to the Emperor he should use general terms, as orators often do, and with this intention. The unkindness he had met with from the church, always more a step-dame than a mother to him, made him incline to the imperial party. Without entirely separating himself from the Catholic faith, therefore, he desired to recommend himself to the electors. And as some of them had renounced Catholicism, not on account of philosophical doubts, but the authority of scripture misinterpreted, and he wished to move their compassion, it was not expedient for him fully to explain, that he had been first secretly, and then openly estranged from the church, not intending to be separated, and for

reasons very different from theirs. And if they had promptly come to his succor, perhaps he might not have cared to be more explicit, believing that concealment which does no hurt to another, may be practised to benefit one's self. His silence, he had hoped, might also avail him in this way. The persons who accused him to the inquisition, as he supposed, were Luca Scalabrino, a citizen of Ferrara, and Ascanio Giral dini, by birth a Jew, but ennobled by the Duke for his services, influenced, as he imagines, by passion or interest, or deceived by the belief that he had really apostatized. Cardinal d'ESTE, he knew, had the reputation of Scalabrino very much at heart. Not to offend him, therefore, in the person of a dependant, and at the same time to render the German princes more favorable to himself, he did not think it important to refute decisively the ignorance or malice of his accusers, if indeed there was any falsehood in the evidence they gave, of which he is not certain, and speaks only from conjecture. If he afterwards broke forth into some extravagances against the Cardinal d'Este, he could affirm on oath it was in no respect from any bad opinion of the

purity of his life or his faith, nor from hatred or revenge. He enters at length into the causes, real or pretended, of the Cardinal's anger. They are, in short, that not content to be honored as a noble prince of Italy, he was displeased because Tasso would not distinguish him above the kings of France and Spain." . .

"Above all things," he continues, "he is surprised that the King of France, the champion of Christianity, and Cardinal d'Este, a cardinal of the Catholic church, should attempt to separate him from the faith of Christ — an opinion, or, if you will, an imagination of his, which, if not true, has greatly the appearance of truth." "Because," he proceeds, "I returned to Ferrara under the authority of the Cardinal Albano, . . . who ordered a great deal to be written to me about Cardinal d'Este's affection, insomuch that, according to his opinion, I had more to promise myself from the Cardinal than from the Duke of Ferrara or the noble-minded Cardinal de' Medici.\* On my

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\* Ferdinand de' Medici, who as Cardinal gave many signs of a more elevated character than he afterwards maintained as Grand Duke of Tuscany, under the title of Ferdinand I.

arrival in Ferrara, I was not received by any one who depended on his sercne highness, but by the dependents of the Cardinal, who, however, fulfilled none of the assurances given me by Cardinal Albano, and this led to the determination for which I was imprisoned."

"I designed that the Duke should cause me to be confined in his own prison, but I was not put there, nor in that of the Bishop or of the friars, where naturally I should have been sent if the inquisition had, or claimed any power over me; but in the prison of the hospital of Sant' Anna, where neither the Duke, as a temporal prince, nor the Cardinal nor the Bishop, as ministers of the Pope, detain me, but the Cardinal only, as Don Louis of Este, exercising a control over my person, which he cannot have otherwise than by usurping the authority of his brother, who is misinformed. Which, whether he does usurp or not, as to what regards the body, I leave your excellency to be informed by Signor Don Agostino Mosti, the prior of this hospital, a lover of religion, always zealously persecuting heretics for the sake of Christ, and a gentleman of such worth, learning, and courtesy, that neither from want of will, feeling, or

judgment, would he have treated me so harshly, had he not been commanded. This only will I say, that during the fourteen months I have been sick in this hospital, I have had none of the conveniences usually given to common people, much less those due to gentlemen like myself. And the medicines of the soul have been denied to me, as well as those of the body. For, although there is a chaplain duly attentive I presume, he has never been to see me in my illness nor shown me any kind of charity, nor has he, although I have often entreated it, allowed me to confess or communicate; and if he deemed me unworthy to sit at the board of angels and partake of the body of Christ, he ought at least to have attempted my conversion, and peradventure, would not have found me obstinate. But not having done so, what am I to think, but that the Cardinal will not allow me to be a Catholic? either because he is angry with me for making stronger demonstrations of Catholicism in France than it appeared to some of his counsellors I ought to have done, or to have an excuse for denying me a place in his court suitable to my merit, and not rewarding me for what I wrote in praise of

his family, which, if not rewarded by the Duke, should naturally have been recompensed by him. Be that as it may, if the Cardinal, so liberal to others, is parsimonious to me, I can only complain of Fortune, who, though she cannot make me change my nature, can change, to my injury, the nature of a generous prince. But that he should deny me the spiritual treasures which it belongs to the Pope to distribute, cannot be charged on Fortune."

He insists, with great reason, that if he has heretofore been careless in matters of religion when he might have enjoyed its benefits like others, that is no excuse for denying them to him now, since his carelessness was never accompanied by contempt. He especially complains that communion is refused him; mentions incidentally his religious education by the Jesuits, and the early age at which he first communicated, etc., and then, reverting to his after doubts, continues, "And certainly, though I do not deny having questioned the real presence, no scriptural quotation made by the heretics, whose books I never read, im-



bued me with those doubts ; but the same causes that made me doubtful of the creation of the world, the immortality of the soul, and the omnipotence of God."

Being convinced of the latter by the innumerable wonders of nature and a thousand external proofs, he found no difficulty in believing the trinity, free-will, and the real presence.

"Since your excellency" (it is thus he concludes) "has heard the truth of my faith, and the concordance of my apparently discordant words, it remains that you favor me with the most clement Duke of Ferrara, by the manifestation of the truth and the granting of the graces I have solicited, before my life, already worn more by infirmity than by years, shall be still farther consumed, of which there does not still remain so little but that I may reasonably think of gathering some fruit from my labors, and enjoying some repose after so many troubles and sufferings. I pray your excellency also, for your interposition with his holiness and the cardinals his ministers, and hum-

bly recommend to you the health of my soul and of this miserable body. From the prison of Sant' Anna, this 17th day of May, 1580."\*

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 24, ed. di Pisa.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN the beginning of his imprisonment, it would appear that Tasso wrote many supplications, memorials, and justificatory pieces, intended to facilitate his release, and not improbably retarding it.\* Two of these were addressed to the nobles and deputies of the people of Naples. The first, if it still exist, has not yet been made public. In the second, he labors to excuse himself, touching the more serious of those reproaches from which he had not before exhibited a full justification, adopting with his countrymen a nobler and bolder style of eloquence than would have been endured by the princes of his time. It has been printed without any indication of the date, but must have been written between the middle of 1579 and the first half of 1581.

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\* Such is Black's conjecture, who taxes the poet with imprudence. Vol. ii., 31, 32, 66, 99.

TORQUATO'S father, it should be premised, had been secretary to SANSOVINO, Prince of SALERNO. One of the immediate causes of that nobleman's disasters was the part he took in the popular discontents of Naples, when the Viceroy TOLEDO, to whom he was personally obnoxious, endeavored to introduce the inquisition, and the people tumultuously resisted it. A deputation to the Emperor was resolved on by the malcontents, and SANSOVINO chosen deputy on the part of the nobles. BERNARDO TASSO counselled him to accept this perilous honor, and the coldness of his reception at court, subsequent disgusts, and an attempt on his life, instigated by the son of the Viceroy, drove him from his allegiance into the service of the King of France. Bernardo, in following the fortunes of a patron who proved himself in the end unworthy and ungrateful, was included among his adherents, attainted of treason, and subjected to forfeiture. His youthful and devoted wife, not allowed to share the exile of her husband, died prematurely of grief, and her brothers took possession of her dowry, which they withheld from her children. TORQUATO,

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after his liberation from Sant' Anna, sought to recover a part of it, and often, but in vain, appealed to the royal clemency for the restoration of his father's effects.

Among many a thrilling tale with which the feudal times abounded, of vassals and their families involved in the ruin of their ambitious lords, BERNARDO TASSO's must ever hold a place. We may not stop to tell it here. Suffice it to say, that though greater horrors may readily be found, the devastation of human affections and of domestic happiness has seldom been more complete. The warmth of TORQUATO's expostulation with the Neapolitans, therefore, was not unreasonable.

*"To the Nobles and Deputies of the People of Naples,\* Torquato Tasso, son of Bernardo Tasso and of Portia Rossi.*

"I know not, lords and deputies of Naples, whether *I* ought most to glory in being born of

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\* "*Seggi*" has been translated "*deputies*." The *seggi* of Naples were originally nothing more than *seats* in the public square, where the principal citizens repaired to converse. In process of time, the term was applied to designate the persons

your blood and on your soil, or *you* to blush at calling me a son of hers. For, if the greatness, nobility, worth, beauty, and courtesy of a country reflect honor on her children, I have enough to be proud of. On the other hand, I will not say, that if the crimes, baseness, or infamy of a citizen, can disgrace his birth-place, you have reason to be ashamed that I draw my maternal origin from yours, since in me there are no faults or vices the like of which, and even greater, have not been found in many who filled high places in your state and were thought worthy the honor of citizenship, even by yourselves. But I will say, rather, that *you* should be ashamed of having left me a prey to the tyranny and cruelty of those who have been pleased to exercise them fiercely upon me, and that had *you* been to me what you ought, it is more likely *I* should have contributed to the improvement of law than its abuse; to the revival of old Italian virtue, rather than inhuman barbarism; to the correc-

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chosen by the people to exercise certain political powers in their behalf. See COLLETTA *Storia di Napoli*, tom. i., p. 414, ed di Capolago, 1834.

tion of errors, instead of their increase. In short, *I* might have proved myself one not unworthy to have counselled you in what manner, consistently with your own content and honor, you might have obeyed your sovereign, and *you* would not have forced me into the slavish service, I will not say of a Busiris, a Phalaris, or a Dionysius, but of *Necessity*, a sterner tyrant than them all, or any other on the roll of time. You forced me, Neapolitans! when you did not favor me; you did me wrong when you denied me justice; you drove me from you when you invited me not. And whom did you thus banish? One who fled for shelter to your city like a felon bent on crime? Or one, rather, who sought refuge amid her temples and her altars, if not with the conscious honesty of his past life, at least with an honest purpose for his life to come? To me, Neapolitans! the courts of justice have been the haunts of barrators; churches and convents, the dens of thieves; friends and relations, tormentors and executioners. I come, then, not so much to excuse my faults, of which you were the cause, as to accuse you of the necessity that led me to commit them. Not like

LYSIAS or HYPERIDES with the Athenians, to flatter and cajole, but like another MILO before his judges, nowise repentant of the deed, and intrepidly regarding others' tears, (if, indeed, there be any to shed one for me,) or like a new SOCRATES, to reason with you, more of your duties than my faults. Prepare yourselves, then, Neapolitans! to listen to my words with the same lofty composure wherewith I prepare myself to receive whatever of good or of evil, of reward or of punishment, awaits me as the recompense of my merits or my crimes.

“ There are two periods of my life during which my actions may be considered. One spent in the service of Don ALPHONSO of ESTE, Duke of Ferrara, the other passed in various wanderings after my flight to Naples. Because the third and earlier portion, while I was with the Lord Cardinal d' ESTE, may reasonably sink into oblivion with my boyhood, where also his avarice to me, unwonted towards others, may be allowed to rest.

“ The principal charges against me, and reasons alleged, as I believe, for secluding me from my species, are also two, discordant and contradictory. The one is my first denial of the



faults I had committed, and especially my want of faith. The other is my having subsequently exaggerated them, making myself guilty even of things whereof I was innocent.

“ These imputations I will so endeavor to repel, that my proceedings will not be so much condemned by the Supreme Judge of all, as the proceedings of those judges who departed far more from the common rules of justice, than I from the ordinary custom of criminals.” . . .

“ If the circumstances of denying, and then of aggravating my faults, are sufficiently excused, my faults themselves alone remain in naked simplicity ; and having, as it appears to me, sufficiently excused them in my defence to the Emperor, I will not undertake any new justification.”\* . . . . .

“ Let us come, then, to the reasons and forms of the judgment.

“ What culprit Neapolitan was ever reproached for denying the accusations against him, or palliating and excusing them, or recri-

\* This reference gives an additional interest to his letter to the EMPEROR, which it has already been mentioned has been sought for in vain.

minating, and making the blame of his adversaries a part of his defence? If, then, when I went before the inquisition, I did not confess all the secrets of my conscience, and said any thing of the malignity of my accusers, and my own good intentions, or my piety, Christian or civil, I committed no error not committed by all; I used no art but what is used by every one, I adopted no defence save that which nature herself teaches to the inexperienced and unlearned. May not the accused employ extraordinary means to defend himself, when extraordinary proceedings are used to inculcate him? If I denied my offence, who denies not his? If I accused my enemies, who does not accuse them? If I availed myself of my prince's favor, who in such cases omits to do so? The holy office, Neapolitans, is not the Areopagus, where it was forbidden to depart from the merits of the case; the less so, because everything belongs to the merits, where a man's whole life is inquired into. I see not, therefore, why, like a new Areopagite, the Dominican friar should be wroth with me for quitting the merits of the cause, which at first I declined doing, or why he should refuse me

such counsel and defence as is allowed to all. Perhaps because he thought me guilty? But is he not aware that the judgments of men are fallible, and that God alone knows the heart, a power peculiar to himself, from which angels and devils are alike excluded? This he ought to know as a theologian; and as a jurist he should know, or as a judge have heard from jurists, that to the common forms of judgment the confession of the accused is indispensable.\* And as a philosopher, if he be a philosopher, he should know, it is better for ten guilty to escape, than one innocent to suffer. Not allowing me defence, therefore, he forgot what belonged to the judge, the theologian, and the philosopher. But, above all, he forgot HUMANITY — of CHARITY I speak not; in convents, perhaps, it is like SILENCE, to be found only on the wall.”† . . . . . , . .

Enlarging on these topics he inquired, where is eloquence prohibited? Where the means

\* According to the civil law.

† SILENCE is frequently seen in convents inscribed on the walls of the refectory.

that move compassion? Where are not the tears of the widow and the orphan pitied, and something pardoned to the infirmity of age, or the promise of youth? And where, on the contrary, is not pride, perfidy, and treason, and cruelty, odious and abhorred? "Wretch that I am!" he exclaims; "to me only are all the affections of humanity forbidden." "And what art," he continues, "was used by me, O just God! not perfectly consistent with justice! What did I say that was not firmly believed?"

. . . . "Nor because I concealed any part of the truth, should I the less be reputed a philosopher, since who are more accustomed than philosophers to secrecy and concealment for the benefit of others?" . . . .

"But what shall be said of the second time that I went before the inquisition at BOLOGNA? Was the inquisitor able, with all his artifice, to draw from me a single falsehood against my adversaries? Is it not unreasonable, then, Neapolitans, that falsehood should prevail against one who would not seek aid from falsehood? And reasonable that all which is doubtful and uncertain should not be believed to his prejudice, and a part even of what is certain,

attributed to the weakness of good nature ? So much for the first part, that of denying my faults, and especially my unbelief. Let us pass to the second, that of aggravating them. This of itself, Neapolitans, is not a crime, but only so from the circumstances, or evil intention attending it. For, otherwise, in the prayers ordered by the church, it would be wrong for men to confess some sins, which perhaps they have not committed. Besides, there have been many who, by taking on themselves the faults of their friends, or their lords, have been thought more worthy of praise than blame, and of reward than punishment. It remains, then, to be seen, whether I aggravated my faults with evil intention, or the circumstances were such as to render the act culpable. When in the prison of the castle of Ferrara, I begged my life of the Duke's clemency, Neapolitans, I used such art only as was admissible with a magnanimous prince like him, desirous of imitating the noble acts of his ancestors. And I used it with reason, because I was not writing to a mere judge, but to a prince. Addressing a judge I ought to have demanded my life only of his justice ; but appealing to a prince, I might solicit it as

a mercy. If, then, I denied to the minister what I confessed to the Duke, I did no more than the extraordinary nature of the case made necessary and proper. Nor was I inconsistent with myself, since the minister I treated like a minister, while I honored the prince as a prince.

“ But when at Turin I confessed that I had been an unbeliever, I said so, persuaded by one who on that occasion was competent to judge, and under guarantee of the word and faith of most honored princes. And I said so in the hope of honor, not of scorn, and with no intention of concealing the truth, but rather of revealing it. And if I was deceived, deceit is less discreditable to the dupe than the deceiver. I should not, therefore, be held less honorable after that action than before. And if I benefited by it, I only derived an advantage it was natural to seek, and even less than I deserved. Because, if it be the judgment of the Duke of Ferrara, approved by the King of Spain, that I must abide by the confession of my past want of faith, it is either just or unjust. If just, I have submitted to it ; if unjust, as it seems to me, I cannot question it, seeing it is adopted by

all the world. And what seek I, O most just God! after so many sufferings — so many deaths — I may say, as I have undergone — but a small part of the honors and rewards justly due to my past toils? If this is all I ask, Neapolitans, should I not be blained as careless, and prodigal of my own, rather than greedy of another's? But you will inquire, of whom do you ask it? Of the Duke of Ferrara, in whose service and honor I have written many things, worthy of larger recompense than any I dare to ask. And if I have written others not entirely to his taste, or against his reputation, I ought not the less boldly to demand some return for my labors. Because, if I offended him, I did so believing he wished to be offended, and if, taking the hand of another, and striking himself, he could not reasonably punish him whose hand he took, neither can he reasonably punish the excesses of my tongue or my pen, produced by his own violence and artifices."

. . . . .

Proceeding to say that he respects the Duke as noble, brave, and honorable, and as such, if free to choose, he would always have praised

and celebrated him, he adds, that he does not deem him so wise as to escape being imposed on, nor infallible in his literary judgments. But if the Duke of Ferrara wants the inclination to reward, or patronize his works, why should they remain unencouraged? If **TITIAN** or **RAPHAEL** paint the likeness of a prince, and the picture does not please, will it fail to find a purchaser? And in like manner, he argues, if his own poems are refused patronage by one sovereign, why should they not receive it from others? Why not from the nobles and people of Naples themselves?

Telling them frankly for what reasons, and to what extent, he is willing to honor them, he concludes :

“ And you, if any promise be made me, see that it is observed ; nor believe that I am more solicitous of profit than of liberty, and character, and honor, without which I see not how profit can exist. Be persuaded, then, that you are the advocates of one who, with the spirit not of trade but philosophy, expects from the **EMPEROR** that sentence which it pleases him to hope will be favorable.”\*

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\* *Lettere*, tom. iv., p. 309, ed. di Pisa.



The last piece of evidence it will be requisite to adduce on this branch of our subject, is a letter of TASSO's to Cardinal ALBANO. Though in a less finished, and more familiar style than his address to the nobles and deputies of the people of Naples, it is equally indicative of vigorous, acute, and unclouded intellect.

*“ To Cardinal Albano.*

“ Mine is a new and unheard-of species of misfortune, which compels me to persuade your lordship I am not mad, and ought not, under that pretence, to be guarded or imprisoned by the Duke of Ferrara. New and unheard-of, surely in our times, and in those of our fathers, and our fathers' fathers, since no such instance is related by them, though one like it occurred in ancient Greece. The children of the famous tragic poet Sophocles tried to prove him a lunatic. He answered by reading his *Œdipus*, recently composed, in consequence of which he was adjudged not merely sane, but wise. I who resemble him, at least in my misery, may in like manner be allowed to appeal to your lordship, a judge no less just, attempting to

convince you I am not mad, whenever I lament over my past infelicity.

“ I pray your lordship, then, to read two dialogues that I have lately written, one on nobility, and the other on dignity, which will sufficiently demonstrate the condition of my mind. And if you wish to read them you must send for them, or at least open to me the commerce of letters, forbidden to me by I know not whose authority. But if acts, no less than words, are the signs by which men are to be judged, why should I be thought not only a fool, but a madman? Whom have I killed, or wounded, or hurt? Who has asked any kindness of me, and been refused? Who has inquired of anything belonging to my studies, and not been answered? Who has sought to help me, and been mocked as by an idiot? Not the physicians certainly, whom I have begged and prayed above all things to come and see me. Not the confessors, whom, in like manner, I have requested and implored; nor any of my old friends, not one of whom I have yet seen. If then, no writing, and no act of mine, condemns me as a madman, with what reason does the Duke of Ferrara detain me in

prison as such? Peradventure it will be said that I have written and spoken more freely of princes and of private persons than I ought, and that I have struck one of the keepers of my prison. To these accusations, my reverend lord, I will specifically reply.

“Of princes it is my duty to speak with honor and respect; and I have never been, I will not say so foolish, but so imprudent, as to forget it, not even in those very productions where the contrary might have been more pleasing to others. But those I wrote, believing that your lordship, and the illustrious and excellent **SCIPIO GONZAGA**, prince of the empire, wished me to undertake the defence of my father against the Dukes of Ferrara and Mantua, against the Cardinal of Este, and also against his most catholic majesty; and I thought, also, that their serene highnesses the Duke of Savoy, the Duke of Urbino, the republic of Venice, the most clement princes of Germany, and Don John of Austria, would approve the defence.\*

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\* This defence is not extant, unless, which is probable, the *Dialogue del piacere Onesto*, is intended. If it be, those parts of it which expressed the poet's indignation against the Car-

But in defending him I have shown, with sufficient clearness, I was not a fool. For fools make no distinction of persons, whilst I have spoken with as much respect of his catholic majesty, as indignation of the Cardinal d' Este and others; so that it seems to me any one might plainly perceive I lacked not resolution to die for my father, nor desired to live, if his catholic majesty denied the life of the father (for an honored memory is life) to the prayers of the son. And he who in this manner is resolved to die, and yet so much loves life that he would not lose it from mere weariness, cannot be deemed a fool. I only regret, my lord, that this defence, which I undertook under your auspices, and those of the illustrious and excellent Scipio Gonzaga, has not been conducted by me with the skill and eloquence it merited; but if I have written anything which has displeased, it was from grief.

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dinal d'ESTE are no longer to be found in it. Though not printed until 1583, it was written as early as 1580. See vol. vii., p. 120, ed. di Pisa; most probably the *Defence*, if they are not identical, and the *Dialogue*, if they are, must have been begun before, because Tasso, among the persons whom he believed would approve the defence, names Don JOHN of AUSTRIA, who died in 1578. See Muratori Annali d' Italia, x., 385.



“If I am mistaken, however, in supposing that your lordship and Scipio Gonzaga urged me to this defence, — if this is but a false imagination — a melancholy humor, is Ferrara so far from Rome that a message or a letter could not have warned me to desist? The Duke of Ferrara, indeed, had it intimated to me. Others, too, advised me to forbear. But was I to obey the Duke of Ferrara, in respect to what I had undertaken by the advice of others against his consent? Surely the authority of those with whom it originated should have restrained me, not that of the Duke of Ferrara, a prince alienated from me, little friendly to my reputation, and inclined to favor, if you will not say my enemies, at least my rivals; but I, who have been wounded in life, honor, and fortune, will say my enemies. And so much for the first point.

“To the second, respecting words, it appears to me by so much the more easy to reply, as I am certain not only others, but the Duke of Ferrara himself, desired that I should speak licentiously, and in this I cannot be deceived. Nevertheless, that your lordship may see, I, as a reasonable man, would contend with the arms

of reason, let the Duke of Ferrara send the Cavalier Gualengo or Count Hercules Tassone to talk with me, and I will so converse with them, on any subject, that there shall remain neither cause nor pretext for keeping me in prison as a madman.

“To the third particular I reply, that I do not deny having struck the keeper, but I have been willing to give him every satisfaction that a man of his condition could desire. And, it appears to me, he could ask no more than what I gave him by the assurance that I thought he wished me to do so. For as there can be no injury with the consent of the party injured, if I struck him believing he desired me to strike him, I had no design to injure him by the blow. But two years have passed since then, and he has had a writing under my hand, in which I promised him two hundred and fifty crowns on certain conditions, to which I hold myself bound not only by law, but by the honor of a gentleman. It seems to me then, I have amply proved to your lordship that the Duke of Ferrara has no ground for confining me as a madman. Now let me consider whether he can imprison me as a criminal.

“The offences are either new or old. For the old, having returned under the word of your lordship, confirmed by the Count GUIDO CALCAGNINI and Signor CAMILLO GIGLIOLI, his gentlemen, he can, in no manner consistent with his honor, detain me on account of them. For the new, if he desired that I should offend him in *some* way, he cannot reasonably complain that I have done so rather in one way than another. The impression by which he probably desired I should be guided was not certain. And peradventure I have many times said things that displeased him, intending the contrary, and even though I could have been sure of the will, who can restrain irrational anger? I did not wish to offend him. He desired to be offended, but in things more hurtful to my reputation than his own. Surely in that manner I was not bound to offend him.

“He complains then, that I love myself better than him; and if he complains of this, he complains unjustly, and has as little reason to find fault with me as to keep me in prison. And if any one entertains a contrary opinion, I affirm positively he does not understand the obligations of honor. But to convince the

Duke of Ferrara that I not only came with the intention to serve and respect him, but still continue in the same mind, let me say, I will never hold my own honor dearer than his, if by the latter is understood the honor he prizes as a prince and a cavalier.

“What would he have me say? That as a sovereign I do not think him tyrannical, and that I acknowledge as just his first judgment respecting me, which I know to be otherwise? Touching honor, as a cavalier, he ought to be satisfied if I hold him in such respect as I do all the chivalry of his time. But are there not many things on which the judgments of cavaliers and even princes differ? As, for instance, whether treaties with a double aspect are lawful? Whether it is ever permitted to break faith? Whether revenge may be taken in the presence of a prince? Nor these only, but many other things are disputed. If I entertain a different opinion from the Duke of Ferrara, shall I say for this, he is less to be honored as a cavalier than those who entertain my opinion? No, certainly. And I hold many who differ from me for most honored. So did I hold the late Duke of Urbino, of happy memory, al-



though he approved treaties with a double aspect, which I condemn; but I do not believe the Duke of Urbino could have been induced to do anything if he doubted whether it was honorable or not. Nor do I think the Duke of Ferrara can do otherwise than doubt whether he has a right to detain me in prison, contrary to promise; nor being doubtful, can he do so with honor; and whoever thinks otherwise is greatly mistaken, as I believe the Duke of Ferrara to be. In other matters, not affecting honor, the Duke can hold what opinions he pleases without any shame to him; but if he thinks, like those who have any literary rivalry with me or I with them, he ought not to hinder me from writing in my own way. That I shall have neither honor nor profit from him, unless I write as he pleases, is what I do not complain of; but I cannot see how he can hinder me from earning a living consistently with his own credit.

“I could easily have made four hundred crowns a year in VENICE. In my two dialogues on Nobility and Dignity, I have given the Venetian nobility occasion to deny me what is granted to every body else in their dominions; because in treating of the prece-

dence of their Doge, and the Duke of Tuscany, and the Grand Duke, . . . \* and the Duke of Ferrara, and other Dukes, it appears to me I have clearly proved by reason, that their Doge should be postponed; and if he has precedence, it is only because it has so pleased the Pope and the Emperor. As much more I might have gained in the kingdom of Naples, from the profits of printing there, and presents from princes and nobles; but respecting the dignity of those six Dukes, I have written in such a manner that the nobility of that kingdom, also, will be little pleased with me.† I should have received a thousand crowns for my poem, if it had been published for my benefit the two different times it has been published.‡ And the

\* Blank in the original. As there was a dispute about the title of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, which the Duke of Ferrara did not recognise, Tasso may have first written the Duke of Tuscany, doubtful how he could avoid offending the one or the other. The six Dukes were, probably, the Duke of Savoy, the Duke of Mantua, the Duke of Ferrara, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Doge of Venice, and the Duke of Urbino.

† The *six Dukes* shows that there was some error or omission in the above blank.

‡ This fixes the date of the letter. Only one edition of the *Gerusalemme* was published in 1580; several in 1581.

Duke of Ferrara has permitted this, or not known how to prevent it, if he desired to do so, and meantime keeps me in prison as a madman, allowing me the bare necessities of life.

"Count Hercules\* tells me I have a right to recover two thousand five hundred crowns from my mother's estate, and my sister writes me I can get thousands. The property of my father was many thousands, which I might have recovered with those dialogues and my poem; and now, if through the Duke of Ferrara, all hopes, not only of this but of what I might certainly have promised myself in the kingdom of Naples and the Venetian states, are lost, it is unreasonable to make me lose, also, my just rights to my mother's property, the recovery of which I would as willingly owe to the justice of the King's ministers as to the courtesy of the princes and nobles of Naples.

"I desire permission to dedicate my dialogues and poem to whoever will assist me to

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\* "TASSO had first written 'my sister,' and then cancelling that, substituted 'Count Hercules,' with another word now illegible."—*Note of the Milanese editor*. Probably it was Count Hercules TASSONE.

recover the two thousand five hundred crowns, or give me an equivalent, and pray your lordship to ask it for me, and I will converse with any one who comes to speak to me in your name.

“Allow me, also, to inform your lordship, that my health has suffered so much in this prison, that I cannot make the same exertions as formerly ; and between the weakness of my constitution and the prejudice done me in the kingdom of Naples and in Venice, I cannot so well procure a subsistence as heretofore.

“Your lordship, therefore, who prevailed on me to come to Ferrara from Savoy, where the prince had offered me the same provision I got from the Duke of Ferrara, and the profits of my works, should provide, or make others provide, I will not say for my convenience, but my reasonable necessities. Your lordship knows how I was born and educated, in what capacity I served the Duke of Ferrara, and might have served the Grand Duke of Tuscany. If now, after five years’ illness and troubles, I have fallen from my rank, by my folly, as they say, even folly deserves compassion as much as punishment ; nor do I see why

I should be less respected than formerly, beginning, even according to the opinion of others, to recover my senses. If esteem is denied me, because, as I believe, my reputation has been injured, though men will not honor me as heretofore, at least they might consider five years' infirmity and suffering a sufficient punishment for every fault, and allow me to live retired, far from courts and favors, not binding me to any service which I dislike and to which no one can constrain me, since over my will no prince in the world has any right, and the Duke of Ferrara least of all, though many may have over my person.\* If he will exercise it to the utmost, I will die, unwillingly indeed, but far more willingly than I would lead the odious life it is desired I should live. I would not willingly die, as I have said, but desire life principally to complete my poem and to write some other things for my own satisfaction. If others would grant me life only that I may yield the

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\* TASSO was by birth a Neapolitan and subject of the King of Spain. His family were of Bergamo, which he claimed as his country. The Duke of Ferrara, therefore, was in no sense his liege lord.

palm to my rivals and enemies, owning myself vanquished, not only in argument but in composition, they may keep the gift which most assuredly I shall not accept. It is true, nevertheless, that if there were any one who wished me to write, not to honor my enemies or disgrace myself, but for his own gratification, I would not refuse to do so as far as I could, but I am not able. And if I regard his satisfaction, he, however great he might be, should have respect for mine, and consider that literary emulation is too strong a feeling to be overcome. But as I am convinced that all the Duke of Ferrara seeks from me, he seeks, not so much for his own satisfaction as for my dishonor, and places his pleasure in my disgrace, let your lordship resolve him that I am neither able nor willing to write long poems; short ones, such as sonnets, canzoni, etc., I will write as he commands, if he wishes me in his service; if he does not, I have said enough of his duty, and your lordship's, and mine, which is to live and die manfully, with cheerfulness if it may be, but with the cheerfulness of a man. Ferrara, 23d May, [1581.]"

## CHAPTER V.

THESE various pieces, too long perhaps, and not always quite clear enough in the opinion of our readers, in spite of abridgment and occasional explanation, have been quoted to very little purpose if a minute comparison of them with each other be requisite to confirm TASSO's affirmation of his own sanity.

Their general tenor evinces a sound and cultivated mind, whose extraordinary powers are frequently attested by long-sustained and energetic reasoning, interspersed with bursts of sublime and pathetic eloquence. Taken all together, they are difficult to resist, and their impression would be weakened rather than increased by contrasting numerous passages of similar import. Belief is yielded less to subtle logic than to adequate proof, and the chief art of successful investigation, literary or scientific,

lies in judiciously collecting, analyzing, and combining the materials subjected to experiment. It often seems that Time and Nature refuse to be interrogated on their mysteries, when in reality they are silent only to careless inquirers. Questioned more wisely or entreated with greater zeal, as if won by devotion or overcome by perseverance, they yield at length their facts one by one to curiosity. These, for a while, float, scattered and confused, amid heterogeneous matter—atoms in chaos—without form and void. Each particle, however, has a species of attraction. Years of patient thought, and the labor of many minds may be necessary to bring them into contact under circumstances favorable to their combination, but the result is instantaneous. When the moment at length arrives, and the re-agent is applied, portions of the mass start forth, assume polarity, arrange themselves, become clear and regular, and the crystallization is TRUTH.

Such, too, is often the process of conviction, though wrought out by means not attentively noted by ourselves, and such, it seems to us, must be the result of this collection of the poet's own representations, made to different persons



at different times, with various objects, and spread over a considerable period. All argument, therefore, would be either superfluous or unavailing.

If these were the work of a madman, ALPHONSO is excused for confining him, and there remains only the contrast between poetic immortality, royal munificence, and a pauper's hospital. But if our minds reject this conclusion, what shall we say of many other admirable compositions, both in prose and verse, all written during his confinement?

Taking it for granted, therefore, that thus far at least the aggregate of proof is in favor of his sanity, instead of a tedious and minute comparison, to show wherein, and to what extent, his several statements coincide, a hasty glance at the most remarkable points of agreement will be sufficient, accompanied by some rules for judging of the rest, and an attempt to reconcile whatever may appear ambiguous or contradictory.

Some general reflections, never to be lost sight of, at once present themselves.

In perusing TORQUATO, we must always recollect to whom, in what situation, and for what

purpose, he wrote. Whether free, or in prison, for the public or confidentially ; to what manner of person, and with what especial object. Thus, for example, the oration to the Duke of Urbino was addressed directly to a friend, but indirectly to all Italy ; he wished to propitiate della Rovere, but without farther provoking Alphonso, and whatever may have been the secret of his counterfeited insanity, he spoke to one who most probably either knew it already, or was not at all likely to approve its publication. His immediate aim was to vindicate himself from the imputation of madness, to hint his motives for wearing the mask of folly, and to explain his reasons for first leaving, and then going back to Ferrara, but all so delicately and respectfully, that his defence might be as little offensive as possible. It was written when he was free, indeed, but a poor and helpless fugitive, before he had spoken disrespectfully of the Duke, and while still ardently desiring to return to his service. With this key it must be read.

The discourse to GONZAGA is dated from prison. It was hastily composed, and sent without correction, and hence the defects of its

style.\* There is no doubt he would have corrected it if it had been meant to receive immediate publicity.† The mutilation it has undergone renders its effect, when entire, matter of conjecture. It may probably be regarded as an apology for this life, having a double purpose to fulfil, that of soliciting his freedom through Gonzaga's influence, and that of remaining, in any sinister event, to testify he was reasonable at least, if not innocent. Its praises of ALPHONSO may be readily explained: SCRPIO GONZAGA was brother-in-law to the Duke, and the discourse, or parts of it, might be read by the latter. But a still more sufficient apo-

\* This appears from the postscript. "*La fretta che ho di mandar oggi questa scrittura ha fatto che io non lo abbia dato se non una rivista correndo.*"

† Tasso's letters abound with proof of his anxiety respecting the finish of whatever he designed for the press. That this production was not of a character to be printed is also further evinced by its being first published more than thirty years after his death, and in its present imperfect form. He remarks, writing to Cataneo, on 18th October, 1581, that this discourse to Gonzaga was not composed "*con quella ch' io stimo buona arte,*" and that he had intended to remodel it. See *Lettere*, tom. iv., p. 158.

logy for them may be found in a sentence of the poet's — "The Prince in whose power I am."

Whatever a prisoner under the entire control of another may say or write to appease the indignation of him by whose order he suffers, must be received by posterity with many grains of allowance. Praise from one so situated comes loaded with the suspicion of hope or fear, while every word of complaint, and every sign of blame, warns us by its very caution, how much injustice and misery must have been borne in silence. Not from the open conversations of the captive therefore, are his real sentiments to be gathered. Whispered hints, and broken murmurs, interrupted by tears and sighs, are the true expositors of his half-stifled meaning.

The letter to Gonzaga, after the discourse, was still more evidently confidential. Some passages of it are curious, but more proper for future than present commentary.

The main intent of the epistle to BUONCOMPAGNO was to declare the nature of his former doubts, and the orthodoxy of his settled faith, and to assert the consistency of what he wrote to the Emperor with what he said to the inqui-

sition. To these points it is principally directed. So far as heretical opinions were made a pretext for detaining him, or scepticism was alleged to have unsettled his reason, to whom could he appeal but the head of the church, or through whom more effectually than the nephew of the Pope?

The address to the nobles and deputies of the people of Naples, bespeaks the sympathy and assistance of his countrymen in a style worthy of himself. Either written when he despaired of pardon from the Duke of Ferrara, except through the powerful interposition of the Emperor, with the hope of which he deluded himself, or trusting it would not reach ALPHONSO'S eye, between whom and the Neapolitans there was little intercourse or community of feeling or policy, its tone is bolder than anything we have from him on the same subject. There is much reason to regret, that neither a prior memorial to the nobles and people of Naples, nor the defence of his father, mentioned in his letter to Cardinal ALBANO, nor his own letter to the EMPEROR, have as yet been found.\*

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\* The preceding memorial to the nobles and deputies of the people of Naples, is mentioned in the *Lettere*, tom. iv.,

Additional and important facts might be gathered from these documents, and perhaps from his supplication to the senate of Milan, still undiscovered. None of them are referred to by any of his biographers, except the letter to the Emperor, which is barely mentioned by Serassi.

The last of the justificatory pieces heretofore quoted at length, is *Tasso's* letter to Cardinal *ALBANO*. This was evidently confidential, and is deeply interesting. It wants, to be sure, the unreserved freedom of his communications to the *DUKE of URBINO* and *SCIPIO GONZAGA*,

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p. 308. The defence of his father, in the letter to Cardinal Albano, ante, 99, and *Lettere Inedite*, p. 61. The letter to the Emperor, *Lettere*, tom. iv., p. 312; tom. v., p. 26; tom. i., pp. 113, 114; tom. ii., p. 115. It is likewise mentioned in a letter to Maurizio Cataneo, vol. x., delle opere di Tasso, ed. di Venezia, p. 268, [tom. iv., p. 158, dell' ed. di Pisa,] where he says he wrote it two years ago; the letter to Cataneo is dated 18th October, 1581. This carries back the date of the letter to the Emperor to the latter part of 1579. The petition to the senate of Milan is mentioned in a letter to Coccapani, vol. ix., ed. di Venezia, p. 238. Perhaps the defence of his father has reference to his *Dialogue del piacere Onesto*, but in that event it must have been altered, for the indignation which, he says in his letter to Cardinal Albano, he expressed in the *defence* against Cardinal d' Este, is not to be found in the dialogue. See ante, 100.

younger men, and more intimate friends. But it is entire, and shows us something of his real opinions about Alphonso, his own strong sense of the injustice done him, and the futility of the alleged causes of his detention. It cannot be overlooked that these contradict each other. Why should angry words, or an attempt to change patrons, be imputed to him as a crime, if he were indeed a lunatic? Why, during fourteen months, deny him medical advice, if he were afflicted with mental as well as bodily infirmity? If heresy were his offence, why was he not sent to the prison of the inquisition, not the hospital of the poor and insane; and why, during so long a period, was there no attempt to convert an involuntary and repentant sceptic? The absurdity of such pretexts is to be equalled only by their cruelty and falsehood.

On the other hand, the general consistency of his own statements is striking. A few of the most remarkable coincidences may be briefly noted. The imitation of Brutus and Solon, recommended to him by signs — the sacrifice, which had no parallel but that of Abraham — the intimation that he must aspire to no fame in letters, but lead a sensual life in

the sty of Epicurus — all of which are mentioned in his oration to the DUKE of URBINO, tally with what he affirms in the discourse and letter to GONZAGA, that new and cruel modes of punishment are devised for him — that he is excluded from the common rights of humanity, and the pale of all law, civil, national, and natural — that he is obliged to understand by signs, like a brute, yet not allowed, like the brutes, to quench his thirst without fear.\* In both a change of service is alluded to, and excused ; and in each, as well as the letter to ALBANO, such language as displeased the Duke is apologized for, and attributed to anger, or to ALPHONSO's own artifice and violence. In the DISCOURSE, as well as the letter to BUONCOMPAGNO, and that to the NOBLES and DEPUTIES of the PEOPLE of NAPLES, his religious doubts are touched upon, and his ultimate conviction of the truths of Christianity affirmed ; while in the two last he maintains the legitimacy of his mode of defence before the inquisition, and insists there was no contradiction between what he said before the HOLY OFFICE and what he wrote

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\* See also his canzone to the Princesses, stanza iii.



to the EMPEROR. In the oration he says the Duke signified to him by signs a wish he was ashamed to manifest by speech — a wish, as it appears by the context, that he should make a third between BRUTUS and SOLON. In the discourse he complains, that as an artist he is forbidden to exercise his art, and declares that he who wishes another to be mad, must not complain if he cannot put bounds or method to his madness. He is furthermore consistent in affirming that the Duke desired to be offended,\* and that Scipio knew the circumstances under which he meditated leaving ALPHONSO's employment, and could excuse him.†

A man who thus repeats the same facts, without contradiction from any one, and contemporaneously produces numerous sonnets, canzoni, dialogues, and discourses, all admirable, if he were not of sound mind, must have been visited with a madness more wonderful than wisdom.

\* See ante, Letter to the Nobles and Deputies of the People of Naples, etc.

† See ante, Discourse to Gonzaga, etc. See also his letter to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Lettere, tom. v., 150, 151.

Let it be once for all remarked, that the philosophy and logic and morality of Tasso, as manifested in these papers, are not intended to be approved without reserve. Much of them, indeed, is open to censure ; but they were the logic and philosophy, and morality, of his age and country and education, and exhibit not the slightest sign of madness.

Not only does the evidence disprove insanity, but refute some of the prominent causes assigned for its origin. These, let them be once more recurred to, were religious doubts, the criticisms on his Jerusalem, the treachery of his friend, and the spoliation of his papers.

The first, if we believe himself, had ended in the entire confirmation of his faith, which, to the last hour of his life, he confirmed by his practice. He says, in the discourse to GONZAGA, "I laughed at my former doubts," and in another place, "I was not at all, or very slightly agitated by my former anxieties."

The exceptions taken to his poem by those to whose censorship he had submitted it, were answered without spleen or passion. For this fact his whole poetical correspondence may be

cited. The alterations advised, almost commanded, by a fanatical inquisitor, seem rather to have fretted and annoyed, than exasperated him. The great attack of Salviati, under cover of the Academy della Crusca, was not made until 1584, when he had been already five years in prison. Tasso's "Apology" was grave, modest, sensible, calm, and learned, and directed first and most earnestly to the defence of his father's memory. When the controversy raged more fiercely, and he was assailed with gross vituperation, he still maintained his temper. A single passage from his rejoinder may be quoted, bearing in mind that SALVIATI had formerly courted the poet, and praised his poem.

"In my prosperity," says he, "they entreated me to a friendship which I sought not; in my adversity they would force me into an enmity which I shun. Formerly they received more of my heart than they could themselves have gained; and even now have lost less of my benevolence than others desired. But ever constant to the same purpose, they have been

swifter in pursuing me than I in retiring; no wonder therefore, that at length we meet."

Is this the language of a fantastic and irritable poet, deprived of reason by critical injustice?

His friend's treachery, the fraudulent perusal of his papers, and violation of his correspondence remain. The effect of these it is not intended to deny or disparage. They probably sunk deep into TASSO's mind, increasing his melancholy, and rendering him misanthropic and suspicious. But between these and madness there is a wide space, which as yet it does not seem TORQUATO overstepped. Neither in the sonnet to a false friend, already quoted, nor in the other on the same subject; nor in any of the letters respecting MADALÒ, do we trace a feeling strong and keen enough to denote vacillating reason.

At length, then, we tread for a moment upon firm ground. TASSO was *not* mad, at least during the two first years of his detention. Some other cause, therefore, must be sought for his IMPRISONMENT.

His sanity being allowed, there results from

it the propriety of seeking that cause from himself. Such a search would be folly if his words were a madman's.

It is equally clear, he was not confined for religious errors. His doubts had ceased; his faith was settled and orthodox; his prison was not that of the holy office; during fourteen months no effort was made to punish the obstinate, convert the deluded, or confess and absolve the repentant sinner. Heresy then, was a pretext only.\* Disrespectful language was another, and a yet weaker one. Serassi says the poet used very strong terms of reproach, extending to the whole house of Este, but he quotes no authority.

TASSO, in his letter to Gonzaga, speaks of the Princesses as partakers in their brother's injury, without saying in what manner, but in the discourse affirms, respecting the Duke :

“In fine, I offended him only by a few light words, the like of which are often uttered by dis-

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\* If, as TASSO often supposed, the Cardinal d' Este was greatly instrumental in his imprisonment, one cannot help conjecturing that this pretence may have originated with him.

contented courtiers, or by treating for a change of service from the necessity of the case, which he may hear from me if he will, and in the manner known to you, most illustrious sir, wherein I do not believe he can think himself aggrieved, and with words that might have been of much importance if not said conditionally, but which were uttered, moreover, in a transport of just anger, not against him, but against one who had given me sufficient cause ; and they were spoken with an intention that they should not have effect, as the sequel shows, and in terms so restricted that it was easy to perceive I had no purpose to remain in his service with a view to his injury, but rather that I sought to go elsewhere, so as not to be obliged to say or do anything that might displease him."

In another part of the discourse, he says :

"Nor do I deem less worthy of pardon the words that I uttered, seeing that they were spoken by a man not only angry, but excessively enraged."

And in his letter to Cardinal Albano last cited :

"I am certain, not only others, but the Duke of Ferrara himself, desired that I should speak licentiously, and in this I cannot be deceived."

And finally, in his address to the Nobles and Deputies of the People of Naples, he remarks, on the same subject :

"Neither can he reasonably punish the excesses of my tongue or my pen, produced by his own violence and artifices."

The enormous disproportion between the offence, even as stated by Serassi, and the punishment inflicted, must strike every one, and the more forcibly, because ALPHONSO was proud, but not habitually cruel. It should also be noted, that the Duke never condescended to give this excuse for TORQUATO'S confinement. On the contrary, having once alleged madness, and as TASSO says, induced him to feign it, he always abided by his first explanation. The merit of inventing a more frivolous plea belongs to Serassi. Without an argument, it may be held "bad for duplicity."

The ground is now cleared for our further

advance, by showing at least that neither madness, nor religious errors, nor angry words, were anything more than excuses for Tasso's imprisonment.

If nothing more can be learned, we know, at all events, for what he was *not* confined. Nor has this circuitous method of investigation been pursued only to rouse languid attention by a suspended interest. To irritate our reader's curiosity and unnecessarily delay its gratification, like the clown in a comedy, who tells everything but what he is asked, would not be worthy of them or of us. Our reserve has a better motive, — a serious wish to separate all the truth that is now attainable from every kind of theory and conjecture. But why not tell us at once what reason Tasso gave? He surely knew why he was confined? These questions are most natural from those, whatever part of the earth they may inhabit, who speak the language of the BILL of RIGHTS, and to whom MAGNA CHARTA and HABEAS CORPUS are words familiar from their youth. To such ears it sounds strange that a prisoner should not know the cause of his detention. But in many parts of Christendom it is sometimes so



even to this day. The accused is left to imagine the reason of his arrest, though so public that he alone may be ignorant of it. If such be the ordinary proceeding, it were useless to say how much greater the precaution in cases of secrecy.

Some time may have elapsed before Tasso heard any cause assigned, but the pleasure of the Duke, or his own alleged insanity. The true one perhaps neither ever gave, and both may have had the strongest motives for concealing it. Replying in the meantime, first to one ostensible accusation, and then to another, he endeavored to prove his sanity, his orthodoxy, and his innocence, or at all events the lightness of his offence, according as madness, heresy, disrespectful language, or an intention to desert the service of his lord, were successively imputed to him. This explains MURATORI's opinion that "Tasso himself was not aware of the reason of his imprisonment, and in his delirium fancied that this dreadful storm had come upon him first from one quarter and then from another."\* This, too, renders

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\* Letter of Muratori to Apostolo Zeno, tom. iv., p. 114. Opere di T. Tasso, ed. di Pisa.

Torquato himself intelligible when he says, in the discourse to GONZAGA, "Whatever may be the charges against me, for I know not myself precisely what they are."

To seek them we return to the order of time.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE first symptom of Tasso's pretended insanity meets us in the account of his drawing a knife upon a servant.

This is said to have taken place in the apartments of the DUCHESS of URBINO.\* We have no account of any such circumstance from Tasso himself. It rests upon the authority of Veniero, who does not speak as an eye-witness. Perhaps he only wrote what was given out, purposely to be repeated. Perhaps it was the first scene in TORQUATO's feigned part. His papers had been searched; his false friend's treachery was known; the plot against him thickened; the combat had occurred; MADALÒ,

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\* May not the device of feigning madness have originated with the Duchess?

after making those boasts, hid under an *et cætera*, had escaped to Florence, and, strange to say, found refuge from the Duke's justice in the house of his own minister. Is it to be supposed he revealed nothing but some criticisms on the Jerusalem? What were the more important treasons of which Tasso speaks?

Let it be conceded that it does not appear the Duke's anger was an immediate consequence of the affair with MADALÒ. From all the circumstances, as it is most natural to imagine, ALPHONSO's favor was first on TORQUATO's side. The baseness and cowardice of his adversary would prejudice every brave and generous mind against him, and if the cause of quarrel in any respect touched the Princess, the time might not have arrived when it would be quite safe to report to the Duke what such a man said of his sister. Besides, we have Tasso's own declaration, that in the beginning of his misfortunes Alphonso showed him the affection, not of a master but a brother.\* All this is against the probability of Madalò's revelations having immediately reached the Duke.

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\* Letter to the Duke of Urbino.

There are some truths which those most interested are the last to hear. The open demonstrations made by the minister of justice do not add much weight to the other proof of the Duke's kindness, because they may be suspected of artifice. Everything considered, however, the most reasonable conjecture is, that *TASSO's* delinquencies reached *ALPHONSO* one by one. First his heretical opinions; then his design to change service; and then some other yet graver faults.

It is manifest that the Duke did not withdraw his favor on account of *TORQUATO's* doubts. According to this discourse, "he conversed on the subject with his loving and beloved lord, and with his license presented himself."

His intention to leave the Duke's service was a more serious matter, discovered most probably by the fraudulent perusal of his letters. Even after this, however, the princesses interceded for him.

"The accusation of being faithless to my Prince"—it is he himself who speaks—"added to the original charges, produced a torrent, nay, a deluge of misfortunes, so great,

that neither any effort of human reason, nor the favor of the most serene Princesses, who exerted themselves earnestly in my behalf, were sufficient to restrain it.”\*

Yet this fault alone was not one whence madness could be inferred, nor as a punishment for which its simulation would be commanded. Nor does Tasso himself elsewhere consider it so very heinous, alleging “the necessity of the case,” and saying, “he does not believe ALPHONSO could think him aggrieved by it.”†

Thus much is plain. It was not in consequence of this act that he lost the favor of the Princesses. They upheld his cause after it was known he had intended to desert the court of FERRARA, and when they abandoned it, besides his contumelious language, if that be “the injury in which they were partakers,” they had, as he conceived, “other causes of displeasure.”‡

In confirmation of the opinion that all the

\* Discourse to Gonzaga.

† Letter to Gonzaga after the Discourse.

‡ Id.

subjects of complaint against him were not known at once, the following sonnet may be quoted.

There is every reason to believe it was written early in his troubles, and there is no allusion to angry words or imputed madness. His "dubious faith" is distinctly mentioned, and may refer either to his religious doubts, or the imputation of disloyalty.

**" TO ALPHONSO, DUKE OF FERRARA.\***

At thy loved name my voice grows loud and clear,  
Fluent my tongue, as thou art wise and strong,

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\* Rime, tom. iii., vol. v., p. 31, ed. di Pisa.

**" AL DUCA ALFONSO DI FERRARA.**

Io pure al nome tuo dolce rischiaro  
La lingua, e 'n dir come sei saggio, e forte  
Par che sopra le nubi aura mi porte;  
Ma tosto caggio in suon basso ed amaro.  
E s' alta tua pietà mio fato avaro  
Non vince, Alfonso invitto, e l' impia sorte,  
Gela mia lingua, anzi il rigor di morte,  
Ch' omai mi verna, e sol pianger m' è caro.  
Piango il morir, nè piango il morir solo,  
Ma il modo, e la mia fe, che mal rimbomba,  
Che col nome veder sepolta parmi.  
Nè piramidi, o Mete, o di Mausolo.  
Mi saria di conforto aver la tomba,  
Ch' altre moli innabzar credea co' carmi."

And soaring far above the clouds my song :  
 But soon it droops, languid and faint to hear ;  
 And if thou conquerest not my fate, I fear,  
     Invincible ALPHONSO ! FATE ere long  
     Will conquer me — freezing in DEATH my tongue  
 And closing eyes, now opened with a tear.  
 Nor dying merely grieves me, let me own,  
     But to die thus — with faith of dubious sound,  
     And buried name, to future times unknown.  
 In tomb or pyramid, of brass or stone,  
     For this, no consolation could be found ;  
 My monument I sought in verse alone."

The strongest presumption, however, that TASSO's imputed delinquencies were established to the Duke's conviction, not suddenly, but gradually, arises from the nature of the thing itself. So long as a favorite enjoys his prince's confidence, all attacks upon him must be made with great caution, because they are apt to recoil. The moment his favor is shaken, many things are exposed from hatred, which were at first suppressed through fear, and at length are listened to. Whether he confesses, and attempts to palliate, or denies, and after denial is convicted of the facts successively charged upon him, he is equally ruined. The only difficulty is in creating the first unfavorable impression.

After his assault upon the servant, his origi-



nal place of confinement was a dungeon in the palace court. This is the tradition still preserved in FERRARA, and confirmed by himself.\* He was set at liberty, says SERASSI, and taken to Belriguardo to divert his melancholy.† Is it certain? No authority is quoted, and on such topics the biographer has not entitled himself to implicit confidence.

It is probable TASSO was never liberated, and if the monks of San Francesco refused to receive him, there is reason to suspect he was not to return to his usual apartments in the palace, but to his former prison.‡

ROSINI, with great plausibility, supposes he was conducted to Belriguardo, to be more conveniently and secretly interrogated, and refers to this period a sonnet of TASSO's to the shade of DUKE HERCULES, ALPHONSO's father, which begins thus :

"Shade of great Hercules ! dost thou not see  
The cruel aim of him that calls thee sire,

\* Serassi, Vita, p. 246, n. 4. Lettere, vol. ix., p. 237, ed. di Venezia. Letter to the Lords and Deputies of the People of Naples, ante, p. 93.

† Serassi, Vita, p. 248.

‡ Rosini, Cavedoniana, iii., p. 39.

Who with unwonted arts would wring from me  
 The words and acts that may increase his ire?  
 From the pure milky way, above the gyre  
 Of wandering stars, and far beyond the sun,  
 Among the pitying angels send down one  
 Who may *their* hearts with clemency inspire," etc.\*

The Professor thinks the Princess herself may have participated in the harsh proceedings to which TASSO alludes.† This conjecture, though countenanced by the expression "their hearts," is too revolting to be willingly indulged, and may be escaped from by supposing the allusion is to the Duke and Cardinal only. Yet it must be confessed there are other complaints

\* Rime, tom. iii., vol. v., p. 35, ed. di Pisa.

" SONNETTO 101.

*Al Duca Ercole di Ferrara, che voglia dal cielo ispirar pietà  
 ne' figli.*

Alme grande d' Alcide, io so che miri  
 L' aspro rigor della Real tua prole,  
 Che con insolite arti, atti e parole,  
 Trar da me cerca, onde ver me s' adiri,  
 Dal gran cerchio di latte, ove ti giri  
 Sovra l' erranti stelle, e sovra il sole,  
 Un messagier di tua pietà sen vole,  
 E spirto in *lor* d' umanitate ispiri," etc.

† Rosini, Cavedoniana i., p. 16.

of rigor on the part of at least one of the Princesses.

“A hell of torment in this life of mine,  
 My sighs are as the Furies breathing flame,  
 Desires around my heart like serpents twine,  
 A bold fierce throng no skill or art may tame;  
 As the lost race to whom Hope never came  
 So am I now — for me all hope is o'er —  
 My tears are Styx, and my complaints and shame  
 The fires of Phlegethon but stir the more.  
 My voice is that of Cerberus, whose bark  
 Fills the abyss, and echoes frightfully  
 Over the stream, dull as my mind and dark:  
 In this alone less hard my fate may be,  
 That *there* poor ghosts are of foul fiends the mark,  
 While *here* an EARTHLY GODDESS tortures me.”\*

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\* Rime, parte prima, vol. i., p. 170.

“SONNETTO 329.

Un Inferro angoscioso è la mia vita,  
 I miei sospir son le tre Furie ardenti,  
 I miei desir la schiera de' serpenti  
 Contra il misero cor fiera ed ardita.  
 La speranza da me fatt' ha partita,  
 Comelaggiù tra le perdute genti;  
 Il pianto è Stige, e i miei sospir cocenti  
 Di Flegetonte la fiamma infinita,  
 Le voci mie son Cerbero, che latra,  
 La valle Inferna, ove il gran fiume mea,

The "Earthly Goddess" is an expression but too significant, and further confirmation of its meaning will be found hereafter. Passages in the discourse to Gonzaga have already been adverted to, from which it appears that ALPHONSO favored him during his difficulties with the inquisition, and that the Princesses did not withdraw their countenance even after his intention to leave the Duke's service was divulged. Besides "participating in their brother's injury," alluding, probably, to the poet's disrespectful language, they had, he imagined, "other causes of displeasure."

It was something more, then, than merely angry words, or a design to quit the court of Ferrara, that drew down upon him so heavy a punishment. Serassi, indeed, quotes part of

E la mia mente tenebroso e atra.

E in questo è a me la sorte assai men rea,

Ch' ivi tormenta la dolente squadra

Spirto infernal, e me TERRESTRE DEA."

See also the canzone to the Prince of Tuscany, post, and observe a passage of the discourse to Gonzaga, where he says, . . . "And I grieve that those who ought to alleviate my misery, or at least console it, should minister to its rigor, and become aiders of its bitterness."

the following sonnet to sustain the opposite conclusion :

“ TO THE DUKE ALPHONSO.

My gracious lord ! if you, indeed, complain  
Of the rude license of my angry tongue,  
Not from my heart, believe me, sprang the wrong —  
It honors you and feels itself the pain :  
Nor should a few rash, daring words and vain,  
Weigh against praises, well matured and long,  
By love and study woven into song,  
Which neither ire nor avarice can stain.  
Why tedious suffering, then, for transient crime,  
And brief rewards for ever-during fame ?  
Such was not royal guerdon in old time !  
Yet my right reasoning is perhaps to blame,  
Honor you gave, not borrowed from my rhyme,  
Which to your merit's grandeur never came !”\*

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\* Rime, parte seconda, tom. iii., vol. v., p. 64, s. 118.

“ AL DUCA ALPHONSO.

Magnanimo Signor, se mai trascorse  
Mia lingua sì, chè ti nojasse in parte,  
Non fu mossa dal cor, ch' a venerarte  
Devoto intende, e sè per duol rimorse.  
Nè temerarj detti in lance apporse  
Debbono a quei, che pensiero, ed arte  
Matura, ed orna, o da vergate carte,  
Che da te sdegno, o fame d' or non torse  
Dunque lunghi gastighi a brevi offese

We will not stop to argue that the language is hypothetical, merely, "*my gracious lord, if you indeed complain.*" TASSO might not then be apprised what coloring the Duke intended to give to his imprisonment, and in striving to appease him would, of course, adopt whatever explanation he thought ALPHONSO preferred, especially if it promised to shorten his own sufferings. The imputation of madness threatened indefinite confinement. Angry words, on the contrary, might be expiated by a temporary seclusion.

It were superfluous to re-urge that the Duke, it would seem, never deigned to assign TASSO's passionate language as an excuse for his punishment, but merely as a proof of his insanity; and the words of the poet more than once quoted, show he was persuaded not only others, but Alphonso "*desired he should speak licentiously,*"\* and that his hasty expressions re-

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Dansi, e per lungo onor breve conforto  
 Dar man reale, in guiderdon non debbe ?  
 Ma pur mia ragion somma ò sommo torto;  
 Ch' in dir di te, non giunse a te, ma prese  
 Onor mio stile, e pregio a sè n'accrebbe."

\* Letter to Cardinal ALEANO, ante, p. 101.

sulted "from the Duke's own violence and artifices."\* Let it be observed, however, in reference to this sonnet, that the enumeration of one fault does not inevitably exclude the supposition of others, for if it did, the project of seeking a new patron, which Tasso indisputably at one time entertained, would be disproved by the omission to mention it. SERASSI advances, as a further confirmation of his theory, a passage from one of the poet's letters to RONDINELLI, in which he says :

"I returned two years ago to Ferrara, recalled by the authority of Cardinal ALBANO, to the nuptials of the lady Margherita Gonzaga, where, not receiving from the serene lord Duke the favors the Cardinal had taught me to expect, I committed, through excess of anger and fancy, some faults for which I was imprisoned."†

It is needless to comment upon the air of caution here observed, or to repeat that it is the language of a prisoner whose letters were often

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\* Letter to the Nobles and People of Naples, ante, p. 95.

† Lettere, tom. iv., p. 191.

intercepted. Still more inconclusive is the extract quoted by Serassi from a letter of TASSO's to the Duchess of Ferrara :

"I do not ask pardon for thoughts or intentions by which I did injury to no one save myself, but for words wherein the violence of others was more to blame than my own will."\*

Besides words then, there were "thoughts and intentions," and for these his excuse is, that they did harm to no one save himself. Let it be supposed that they related exclusively to a change of service. There still remains the invincible difficulty of supposing a command to feign madness on account of this simple offence ; because, at the time that order was intimated, the angry words had not been uttered.

A short extract from a long letter of his to the Duke, authorizes the conjecture that there were other topics of complaint which, even in writing to ALPHONSO, it was expedient to indicate with great circumspection. After many scholastic exhortations to clemency, he says :

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\* Lettere, tom. i., p. 312.



“And having said thus much of **MERCY** and of **JUSTICE**, I throw myself at your feet, most clement lord! and pray you to pardon the false, foolish, and daring words for which I was put in prison, and at the same time obtain me forgiveness for all my other faults of temerity, and particularly those which concern the offence of any prince. For if, not from hatred but passion, I have erred against your highness and others, it would be an act worthy of your clemency, that this and every other fault of mine should be pardoned.”\*

What then were his other faults? Why are they characterized as faults of temerity? How did they concern the offence of any prince? Is there anything to connect them with that “heavy sin of temerity,” of which he once accused himself, “in having dared to lift his thoughts so high?”

Independent of contemporaneous rumor, it is certainly remarkable how many authors have agreed in finding among his poems written about this period the confession of errors

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\* Lettere, tom. i., p. 272, ed. di Pisa.

caused by LOVE. Part of one of his sonnets has been often cited :

" Celestial Virgin ! scales like thine from heaven  
My earthly lord received, and yet denies  
No grace or mercy. Could my heart be riven  
And seen by him, would he not say arise !  
What to true lovers shall not be forgiven  
In whom all imperfections FATH supplies."\*

Another addressed to ALPHONSO, has also been frequently relied on :

" TO THE DUKE ALPHONSO, ASKING  
TO BE LIBERATED.

Like a new Ixion upon Fortune's wheel,  
Whether I sink profound or rise sublime,  
One never-ceasing martyrdom I feel,  
The same in wo, though changing all the time.  
I wept above, where sun-beams sport and climb  
The vines, and through their foliage sighs the breeze,

\* Rime, parte prima, tom. i., vol. iii.

. . . . .

" Vergine bella, il mio Signor in terra  
Ha bilance alle tue ben somiglianti ;  
Tu gliele desti, e non le torse affetto.  
Ma se vedesse ciò, che' l mio cor serra,  
Diria : chi non perdona ai fidi amanti,  
In cui per fè s' adempie ogni difetto ?"

I burned and froze, languished and prayed in rhyme.  
 Nor could your ire, nor my own grief appease.  
 Now in my prison, deep and dim, have grown  
 My torments greater still and keener far,  
 As if all sharpened on the dungeon-stone:  
 Magnanimous Alphonso! burst the bar,  
 Changing my fate, and not my cell alone,  
 And let my fortune wheel me where you are!"\*

The general appositeness of Tasso's mythological allusions gives an importance to the first line it would not otherwise possess. His figures

\* Rime, parte seconda, tom. iii., vol. v., p. 31, Son. 53.

"AL DUCA ALFONSO, DIMANDA LA  
 SUA LIBERAZIONE.

Me novello Ission rapida aggira  
 La rota di fortuna, e s' in sublime  
 Parte m' innalza, o pur se mi deprime,  
 Sempre però m' affligge, e mi martira.  
 Piansi lassuso, ov' entra il sole, e spira  
 L'aura più lieta tra frondose cime:  
 Arsi, gelai, languìi, pregando in rime,  
 Nè scemai le mie pene, e la vostra ira.  
 Or in carcer, profondo o son cresciuti  
 I miei tormenti, od è più acuto e forte  
 Vecchio dolor, cui giro aspro sia cote.  
 O magnanimo Alfonso, a me sì muti  
 Non sol prigion, ma stato: e se mia sorte  
 Rotar pur vuole, intorno a voi mi rote."

of that description are always significant, though not always gracefully or naturally introduced, and, in this instance, perhaps, more than the mere penalty of his fault may be hinted. That something alleged against him was imperfectly proved, results not only from the cruel aim of extorting a confession by "unwonted arts," heretofore adverted to, but is farther confirmed by the *terzetti* of the eighty-eighth sonnet, in which he implores the spirit of the deceased Duke Hercules to send a celestial messenger with *ASTREA'S* scales from Heaven, because those of earth are false :

"There the old fault with the past-suffered pain  
Be balanced — placing merits on one side  
And errors on the other. Thus, again,  
Thy son, my honored lord, may well divide  
Evil from good, *the certain from the vain*,  
And between FATE and WILL like Jove decide."\*

It is not unworthy of note, that a sonnet ad-

\* Rime, parte seconda, tom. iii., vol. v., p. 49, Son. 88.

"Quivi l' antica colpa, e 'l già sofferto  
Gastigo in un sì libri, e dall' un lato  
Stian gli error miei, dall' altro ogni mio merto,  
Poesia il tuo figlio, e mio Signor laudato  
Pesi col bene il mal, col dubbio il certo,  
Qual Giove in Ciel pesa il volere, e 'l fato."

dressed to the PRINCESSES, and evidently written in the first days of his imprisonment, neither earnestly repels the imputation of madness nor entreats pardon for using terms of reproach. The topics dwelt upon are his misery, the continuance of his former virtues, and his constant truth, honor, and devotion :

“ TO THE PRINCESSES OF FERRARA.

“ Sisters of great Alphonso! to the West  
 Three times have sped the coursers of the sun,  
 Since sick and outraged I became a jest,  
 And sighed o'er all that cruel Fate has done;  
 Wretched and vile whatever meets my eye  
*Without* me, wheresoc'er I gaze around;  
*Within*, indeed, my former virtues lie,  
 Though shame and torment's the reward they've found.  
 Aye! in my soul are TRUTH and HONOR still —  
 Such as if seen, the world were proud to own,  
 And your sweet images my bosom fill;  
 But lovely idols ne'er content alone  
 True hearts; and mine, though mocked and scorned at will  
 Is still your temple, altar, shrine, and throne.”\*

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\* Rime, parte prima, tom. i., vol. iii., p. 177, Son. 343.

“ ALLE PRINCIPESSA DI FERRARA.

“ Suore del grand Alfonso, il terzo giro  
 Ha già compiuto in gran pianeta eterno,

In a canzone, however, also inscribed to the sisters, and composed shortly after the sonnet, among several interesting allusions to his situation, is one to the offence committed by his tongue. Yet that topic is not treated with the deep and passionate repentance which one would expect from the general tone of the composition, had angry language been his only, or even his greatest fault.

If the presumption of attempting to translate any part of a canzone so celebrated can be forgiven, some extracts from it will be far better than any commentary for those who do not read Italian, while the original will enable those who do, to appreciate the inferences de-

Ch' io dallo strazio afflitto, e dallo scherno,  
 Di Fortuna crudele egro sospiro,  
 Lasso ! vile ed indegno è ciò che miro  
 A me d' intorno, o ch' in altrui discerno :  
 Bello è ben, s'ivi guardo, il petto interno ;  
 Ma che ? premj ha sol d' onta, e di martiro,  
 Bello è sì, che veduto al mondo, esempio  
 Fora d' onor: vi siete ambe scolpite,  
 E vive e spira l'una e l' altra immago.  
 Pur d' Idoli sì belli appien non pago,  
 Il ver desio ; ma voi, lasso ! schernite  
 La fede, e 'l cor ch' e vostro altare e tempio."

duced from it and the difficulty of transfusing the expressions which authorize them, at once exactly and poetically into another tongue. That task it is not pretended has been here well performed.\*

“TO THE PRINCESSES OF FERRARA.

Fair daughters of René! my song  
Is not of pride and ire,  
Fraternal discord, hate, and wrong,  
Burning in life and death so strong,

\* “It will sufficiently appear,” says Serassi, “by reading this canzone and that to the Duke, ‘O magnanimo figlio,’ etc., with what strong colors he painted his misery, and how eloquently he strove to move their compassion. But all his efforts proved fruitless, at least for the moment, the wounds inflicted on those tender bosoms by his daring words being still too green,” (pp. 290, 291.) This explanation he may possibly have drawn from some authentic source, but unhappily does not quote his authority.

“ALLE PRINCIPESSA DI FERRARA.

O figlie di Renata  
Io non parla alla pira  
De' fratei, che ne pur la morta unio,  
Che di regnar malnata

From rule's accurst desire,  
 That even the flames divided long  
 Upon their funeral pyre.\*  
 But you I sing, of royal birth,  
 Nursed on one breast like them;  
 Two flowers, both lovely, blooming forth  
 From the same parent stem —  
 Cherished by heaven, beloved by earth —  
 Of each a treasured gem!

To you I speak in whom we see  
 With wondrous concord blend,  
 Sense, Worth, Fame, Beauty, Modesty —  
 Imploring you to lend  
 Compassion to the misery

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Voglia, e disdegno, ed ira  
 L'ombre, il cener, le fiamme anco partiò;\*  
 Ma parlo a Voi, che pio  
 Pro dus se e real seme,  
 In uno stesso seno  
 Quasi in fertil terreno,  
 Nate, e nodrite pargolette insieme,  
 Quasi due belle piante,  
 Di cui serva e la terra, e il Cielo amante.

A voi parlo, in cui fanno  
 Sì concorde armonia  
 Onestà, senno, onor, bellezza, e gloria:  
 A voi spiego il mio affanno,  
 E della pena mia

\* Eteocles and Polynices, who fell by each other's hands, and whose ashes are said to have separated on the funeral pile.



And sufferings of your friend.  
 The memory of years gone by,  
 O! let me in your hearts renew —  
 The scenes, the thoughts o'er which I sigh,  
 The happy days I spent with you —  
 And what, I ask, and where am I —  
 And what I was, and why secluded —  
 Whom did I trust and who deluded ?

Daughters of heroes and of kings,  
 Allow me to recall  
 These and a thousand other things —  
 Sad, sweet, and mournful all !  
 From me few words, more tears, Grief wrings —  
 Tears burning as they fall.  
 For royal halls and festive bowers  
 Where, nobly serving, I

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Narro, e' n parte piangendo, acerba istoria;  
 Ed in voi la memoria  
 Di voi, di me rinnovo:  
 Vostri affetti cortesi,  
 Gli anni miei tra voi spesi,  
 Qual son, qual fui, che chiedo ove mi trovo,  
 Chi mi guidò, chi chiuse,  
 Lasso! chi m' affidò, chi mi deluse ?

Questa cose piangendo,  
 A voi rammento, o prole  
 D' Eroi, di Regi, gloriosa e grande:  
 E se nel mio lamento  
 Scarse son le parole,  
 Lagrime larghe il mio dolor vi spande.  
 Cetre, trombe, e ghirlande  
 Misero, piango, e piagno

Shared and beguiled your private hours,  
 Studies, and sports I sigh;  
 And lyre, and trump, and wreathed flowers;  
 Nay more, for freedom, health, applause,  
 And ev'n HUMANITY's lost laws!

Why am I chased from human kind?  
 What CIRCUMSTANCE in the lair  
 Of brutes, thus keeps me spell-confined?  
 Nests have the birds of air,  
 The very beasts in caverns find  
 Shelter and rest, and share  
 At least kind Nature's gifts and laws,  
 For each his food and water draws  
 From wood and fountain, where,  
 Wholesome, and pure, and safe, it was  
 Furnished by Heaven's own care;

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Studj, diporti, ed agi,  
 Mense, logge, e palagi  
 Ov' or fui nobil servo, ed or compagno:  
 Libertade, e salute,  
 E leggi oime! d' umanità perdute.

Da' nipoti d' Adamo,  
 Oime! chi mi divide  
 O qual CIRCUMSTANCE mi spinge infra la gregge?  
 Oime! che in tronco o in ramo  
 Augel vien che s' annide,  
 E fera in tana ancor con miglior legge.  
 Lor la Natura regge:  
 E pure e dolci e fresche  
 Lor porge l' acque il fonte;  
 E 'l prato e 'l colle e 'l monte  
 Non infette salubri, e facili esche;

And all is bright and blest, because  
 FREEDOM and HEALTH are there !

I merit punishment, I own ;  
 I erred, I must confess it ; yet  
 The fault was in the tongue alone —  
 The heart is true. — Forgive ! forget ! —  
 I beg for mercy, and my woes  
 May claim with pity to be heard ;  
 If to my prayers your ears you close,  
 Where can I hope for one kind word  
 In my extremity of ill ?  
 And if the pang of hope deferred  
 Arise from discord in your will,  
 For me must be revived again  
 The fate of Metius\* and the pain.

E'l ciel libero, e l'aura  
 Lor luce e spira, e lor scalda e ristaura.

Merto le pene errai  
 Errai, confesso ; e pure  
 Rea fu la lingua, il cor si scusa e nega  
 Chiedo pietade omai ;  
 E s'alle mie sventure  
 Non vi piegate voi, chi lor si piega ?  
 Lasso ! chi per me prega  
 Se voi mi sete sorde ?  
 Deh ! se voler discorde  
 In si grand uopo mio vi fa diverse,  
 In me fra voi l' esempio  
 Di Mezio\* si rinnovi, e 'l duro scempio.

\* Metius was torn asunder by wild horses.

I pray you then, renew for me  
 The charm that made you doubly fair,  
 In sweet and virtuous harmony  
 Urging, resistlessly, my prayer;  
 With HIM for whose lov'd sake, I swear  
 I more lament my fault than pains,  
 Strange and unheard-of as they are." etc.

Among Tasso's madrigals, it has already been observed, there are some to ANGELA, a female favorite of ALPHONSO's, for whom also three of his sonnets were written. In the two first he entreats her to carry his prayers to the Duke, and in the third says her angelic voice

" Pardon will ask, for one who sings and weeps  
 O'er his FOND FAULTS," etc.\*

Quell' armonià sì nova  
 Di virtù, che vi faee  
 Sì belle, or bei per me faeeia concetti,  
 Siceh' a pieta commova  
 Quel Signor, per eui spiaee  
 Più la mia colpe a me che i miei tormenti  
 Lasso ! benche eoeenti ;" etc.

\* " Chiede pietà per un, che eanta, e piange  
 Gli error suoi folli," etc.

See Rime, parte prima, tom. i., vol. iii., p. 125, Sonnetto 239.  
 See also Sonnets 228, 229, 244, 250, tom. i., vol. iii., and Madrigals 14, 20, 176, 118, with the editor's remarks in the ed. of Pisa.

One of the strongest of the poetic proofs to be met with in his acknowledged works, has been hitherto strangely neglected. It is found in the canzone to the PRINCE of TUSCANY, which, even in ROSINI's essay, is not cited, though briefly glanced at in his "Avvertenze."\*

" But I—than other lovers' state,  
So much more hard, alas! my own,  
As Love less cruel is than Hate—  
Must sigh to winds that round me moan,  
Just anger at my unjust Fate—  
And not for sweet illusions flown,  
Averted look, or prudish air,  
False words, or a deceitful tone,  
Disdainful smile, or frown severe,  
Nor roses lost, nor lilies flown,  
Nor glove, nor veil reclaimed, alone—  
No! no! alas! from none of those  
Arise my far more serious woes.

For I, unhappy wretch! complain  
Of torments strange and new  
Save in the realms of hate and pain,  
Nor does a tear for me bedew  
Even Pity's cheek, which free from stain

\* Rime, tom. iv. vol. vi., p. 219, ed. di Pisa, he merely says: "Si osservino i tre primi versi e gli ultimi cinque delle stanza iii." The canzone is at page 138 of the same volume.

Wears a pale marble hue.  
 Nor of my living hell the gates  
 Can I break down, where angels deign  
 My faults to punish, like the Fates,  
 Because I dared in burning strain  
 On my poor lyre my griefs to own,  
 Like ORPHEUS finding once again  
 My PROSERPINE can turn to stone!"\*

\* " PEL PRINCIPE DI TOSCANA DA S. ANNA.

. . . . .  
 Io, che tanto più sono  
 D'ogni amante infelice,  
 Quanto odio è più d'amor pronto a far danno,  
 Aure, in voi spargo il suono,  
 Che del mio petto elice  
 Or giusto sdegno, ed or non giusto affanno:  
 Non d'un soave inganno  
 Di voce lusinghiera:  
 Non d'un guardo furtivo:  
 Non d'un sembiante schivo:  
 Non d'un fronte rigida e severa:  
 Non d'un guanto, o d'un velo,  
 Che gigli copra, e rose, i' mi querelo.

Misero! ma sì doglio  
 De' più nuovi tormenti,  
 Che abbia il regno dell' odio, e della sorte  
 E veggio farsi scoglio  
 Pietade a' miei lamenti,

Farther poetical extracts would but swell this volume, already larger than was at first intended. A reference to other productions is subjoined for the sake of those who desire to continue their researches;\* the rest of our

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Tinta nel volto di pallor di morte;  
 Nè posso aprir le porte  
 Di questo vivo Inferno,  
 Ove son degli errori  
 Gli Angioli i punitori,  
 Perch' io sfoghi cantando il duolo interno  
 Novo Orfeo colla cetra;  
 Tanto la mia Proserpina s' impetra!" etc.

\* See, in addition to the Rime already cited, as addressed to the Princess LEONORA, and those hereafter referred to, as quoted by Rosini, the following, on account of their connection either with his love, his madness, or imprisonment.

#### TOM. I.

Sonnets 165, 185, 220, 228, 229, 239, 247, 249, 250, 258, 259, 364, 423, 424, 425, 426; note in the latter "*la data fede*."

#### TOM. II.

Madrigals 44, 51, 55, 128, 129, 160, 163, 175, 203, 237, 242, 243, 247, 249, 273, 374, 375, 376, 378.

#### TOM. III.

Sonnets 77, 81, 83, 84, 85, 88, 95, 97, 100, 102, 108, 109, 110, 111, 144, 461.

readers will doubtless be satisfied with a single prose quotation. It is from a letter to the Duke of Urbino.

"I entreat your serene highness to favor me with my Lord Duke, and the Lord Cardinal Guastavillani, to the end that I may be released from this prison of Sant' Anna without being troubled for those things which from phrenzy I have done and written in matters of LOVE."\*

The autograph of this letter is now no longer to be found,† and in the editions of the day the place of the last word is supplied by a blank.

MANSO, indeed, gives it as it was; but his authority might be disputed if it were not for

#### TOM. IV.

Sonnets 42, 58, 83, 84, and sonnets 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, of the Rime Piacevoli.

Madrigal 1.

#### RIME INEDITE.

Madrigals 5, 6, 10, 20, 25, 40, 41, 56, 61, 62, 63.

\* Lettere, tom. i., p. 287, 288.

† Rosini Cavedoniana, part iii., p. 22.



MURATORI'S.\* That candid, erudite, and judicious critic fills the blank in the letter at a time, when being librarian to the Duke of Modena, he must have seen the original. The question of its authenticity, therefore, is irrevocably settled, and with it the cause of TASSO'S imprisonment. Taken in connection with the foregoing proofs, it leaves little room for doubt, though the details are unknown to us, and perhaps doomed to remain so.

There can be no difficulty at least in adopting the opinion of CORNIANI, expressed in his own grave and measured terms. After quoting MURATORI'S letter to APOSTOLO ZENO, and remarking upon the impossibility of reconciling the heavy penalty inflicted, with the inconsiderate offence alleged, he adds :

“ Is it not more reasonable to believe that jealous honor prompted ALPHONSO to such otherwise inexplicable severity ? In my opinion, the imprisonment of TASSO is as great a

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\* Letter to Apostolo Zeno. Lettere, tom. iv., p. 111, delle opere di T. Tasso, ed. di Pisa.

mystery as the exile of OVID, and probably of the same character.”\*

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\* . . . “E non sarà più ragionevole il credere che gelosa cura di onore offeso inducesse Alfonso ad una tale inesplicabile severità? La prigionia del Tasso è a mio credere un arcano eguale a quello dell' esilio di Ovidio e forse della medesima indole.” *I secoli della Letteratura Italiana Epoca Sesta*, art. xxx., § v., vol. vi., pp. 232, 233, ed. di Brescia, 1819.

## CHAPTER VII.

ENOUGH, perhaps, has been said on this part of our subject, if we are to stop at the limits of strict proof. But curiosity has long busied itself with conjectures, and our task would be unfinished if all notice of them were omitted. It will be remembered, that in one of the fragments of his mutilated discourse to GONZAGA, he observes, speaking of his poems, "And if they contained anything lascivious, like tares among the wheat, it is known that I intended to correct it." Ominous blanks precede and follow this sentence. Without ascribing to the court of Ferrara greater rigor than belonged to an age which worshipped *ARIOSTO*, and patronized *ARETINO*, it is difficult to imagine that *TASSO*'s sins against decency — very far lighter in comparison — should have been visited with any great indignation, unless they affected an exalted personage.

In his canzone to the Prince of Tuscany, he

says, " he is punished in a living hell by angels, because he unburthened his bosom to his lyre ;" and in his letter to the Duke of Urbino he speaks of the things " which through phrensy he had done and written in matters of love." Before his journey to France he left with Rondinelli some compositions, which he desired " should be buried with him." The improbability that these productions were written for another has already been remarked. Tasso's solicitude that they should never see the light, favors the belief that they related to himself. This desire could not have arisen from literary demerit, which is not the fault of his passionate effusions. If he judged differently why not destroy them ? Does not their very preservation lead us to infer they must have had an interest stronger than any that attaches to verses extorted by the importunity of a friend ? — associations too powerful and too tender for his prudence or his firmness ? A personal reference in the only one distinctly specified has been conclusively shown ; and the energy of language to be found in all his most objectionable pieces, authorizes a like presumption with respect to the rest also. Who writes for ano-

ther as he writes for himself? We have seen that several of his sonnets were falsely entitled, and the one sent to LEONORA from Castel-Durante was described as having been "composed for a hapless lover sometime in anger with his mistress," merely for disguise. Is it probable such a mask was only once worn? That the papers left with Rondinelli were the same alluded to in the discourse, or the same pryed into by Madalò, is of course incapable of proof. What may be safely affirmed is, that some of his productions contained passages exceptionable for their freedom, "like tares among the wheat," "which it was known he intended to correct," and that he deemed this circumstance of consequence enough to be noted in connection with his imprisonment, and other important events of his life, in an apologetic treatise.

But in what manner could the intended correction of these verses bear upon his imprisonment, or interest those who caused it, unless the verses themselves referred to some one very dear to the Duke? Why should "bitter rigor," and "unwonted arts," be used to extort confession of unimportant "words and acts," and

how could their avowal increase ALPHONSO'S ire, if he were unconnected with the person whom those "acts and words" concerned?

If we suppose, on the other hand, that his imprisonment was occasioned by the accidental or treacherous disclosure of amatory poetry, suspected to be addressed to the Princess, everything becomes intelligible — his mistress's early injunctions of silence — his directions to Rondinelli — the dearer mysteries of his heart half-hinted to GONZAGA — the reference to her who corresponded so little to his love — his heavy sin of temerity — Madalò's more important treasons — the attempt to extort confession — the bitter rigor and unwonted arts — the words and acts that might increase Alphonso's ire — the order to feign insanity — the sacrifice of Abraham — the command that he must aspire to no fame of letters — the prohibition to write — the anger of the Princesses — the allusions to his fond faults — to his Proserpine — to Ixion, and to the angels that punished him.

By this supposition, also, LEONORA'S voluntary celibacy, notwithstanding the most advantageous offers of marriage, and TASSO'S con-

stant devotion to the Duke, in spite of the rigor of his chastisement, are sufficiently accounted for.

ROSINI anxiously sought, and believes he has discovered, the identical verses that caused TASSO's punishment. He adduces several, sufficiently inexcusable, but their very number provokes a doubt, and there is nothing that irresistibly connects any of them with LEONORA. If they do indeed refer to her, they overpass so far the bounds of respect and modesty, as to indicate weakness on her part, or vain-glorious falsehood on his. In either case, happy would it have been for him if he had never written, what it is alike disreputable to feign or to betray — the mysteries that faith, delicacy, and even love itself, hold for ever inarticulate.\*

\* The rhymes quoted by Rosini are the following:

Tom. i., sonnets 348, 185; tom. ii., dialogue ii., p. 119; tom. i., sonnets 258, 259; Rime Inedite, madrigal 62; the quartina and stanza from the Alberti MSS., hereafter given, and the following, from the same source, published by Signor Betti:

" Fiamma d' amor, che mi divori il petto  
 Spengi una volta il tuo fatale ardore:  
 Libertade perdei, e d' intelletto

Whether the circumstances alluded to in these rhymes were feigned or real, it is impossible to absolve Tasso from the deepest censure. How must the Princess have been outraged in either alternative! In one there was a breach of truth — in the other of confidence — in both of honor. The very excellence of the poetry is an aggravation of the injury, since it rendered not only public, but immortal, that which, whether true or false — proceeding from the delirium of joy or of fancy — her lover should have buried in eternal silence. If his raptures were imaginary, disgust and contempt must to some extent replace the pity we have felt for him. If real, his vanity and imprudence find palliation only in the unnatural obstacles which power and prejudice opposed to a lawful union with the object of his affections. ROSSINI inclines to the first opinion, and supports it principally by these reasons. He was pardoned by LEONORA; he was not condemned to

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Privo mi vuol l'irato mio Signore;  
 D' Eleonora ottener non puoi l'affetto  
 Dunque a che giova un disperato amore?  
 Vanne lunghi da me, vanne in eterno,  
 Il fuoco ad' aumentar giù nell'Averno."



death by the Duke. The Professor imagines that the Princess would more readily forgive the boast of favors never won, than the violation of confidence reposed ; and therefore attributes to the poet what he esteems the lesser crime. Those little skilled in such casuistry, and between offences equally dishonorable unwilling to decide, may find room to doubt the forgiveness of LEONORA, perhaps even her constancy. The proof of the pardon advanced by ROSINI is in its very terms equivocal, and still farther impaired by the sonnet and canzone to the Princesses, and the sonnet to the Marquis of PALENO.\*

A sufficient cause for the anger, though not for the cruelty of the Duke, and a justification of the subsequent passiveness of his sister, though scarcely of her apparent indifference to the severity of her lover's punishment, may undoubtedly be found in the various quotations combined by the Professor. The productions cited, true or false, if they related to LEONORA,

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\* Rime, parte prima, tom. i., vol. iii., p. 221, sonnet 431, and ante, p. 48, vol. i., and p. 151, vol. ii.

must have wrung the most sensitive portion of a woman's and a brother's heart. Though not destined to see the light, merely to have written them was a fault which any high-spirited female, whether PRINCESS or peasant, might forgive possibly, but never could forget. Such wounds time and repentance may indeed heal, but they always leave behind them sad mementoes of past suffering and imperfect cure. With the first serious wrong committed on either side, LOVE loses half his divinity : borne down by the weight of our infirmities, his pinions droop, as if loaded by the fogs of earth, until from the heavens, to which he soared, in the ardor and confidence of soul, that claims kindred with the stars, he sinks to the level of mortality, never more to rise beyond it.

ROSINI's second argument, on which he most relies — the capital punishment that awaited TASSO, if his verses had been deemed true — is sustained by a reference to the secret history of the times. The miserable fate of Duke ALPHONSO's first wife, LUCRETIA de' Medici, daughter of COSIMO I., and of Maria de' Medici, her sister, show the facility with which

death was then inflicted for similar offences.\* And though by an extraordinary exception Tasso's life might have been spared, Rosini conceives he would never have been liberated. But supposing his verses to be false, the order to feign madness may have seemed an adequate and appropriate penalty to the Duke, according to the opinion of the Professor. Subsequently refusing to abide by the imposture, and proclaiming his sanity, the imprisonment in Sant' Anna, which was colored with the pretence of cure, savored, in reality, more of vengeance than of justice. Yet it may well be objected, that the penalty of Tasso's transports was severe enough, even if they were true, while the stain of princely honor was made more doubtful by imputed madness, than even by death itself.

After all, however, affected insanity might

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\* These are the examples cited by Rosini, Saggio, 99. He might have added the fate of the Duke of Andria, the lover of the Princess of Venosa. *Rime Inedite*, vol. xxxii., delle opere di Tasso, pp. 9, 166; and those of the Page Malatesta of Rimini, the lover of Maria de' Medici, and Bernardo Antinori, the lover of Leonora di Toledo de' Medici. *Origine e Descendenza della Real Casa de' Medici*, 313, 323, MSS.

appear to the Duke a just, and not disproportionate punishment for the temerity of plighted vows, or the project of a secret marriage, and the mind would fain escape by this unsupported conjecture, from conclusions derogatory to the fame of the poet, and the honor of LEONORA.

When persons of such extraordinary merit have suffered in their lives misery as signal as their genius was eminent, it seems hard to condemn them, after death, on mere probabilities. Posthumous attainder is nearly banished from modern legislation, and if in ordinary tribunals doubt insures acquittal, how much more should it do so when posterity sits in judgment upon the illustrious unfortunate, who found refuge from their sufferings only in the grave.

They still preserve in the library of Ferrara, a MS. collection of poems sent by TASSO to the Princesses, with the following dedication :

*“ To the Princesses of Ferrara.*

“ I dedicate to your highnesses these rhymes, composed during these last years of my wretchedness, that it may be seen neither the malignity of men nor of fortune have power to efface

your worth and merit from my memory, or to take from me the desire to serve and honor you ; and I flatter myself with the hope, that if you perceive the spirit both of mind and of heart in which they are written, it will not go unrecompensed. Among the greatest of rewards, however, I shall esteem their passage, under the protection of your glorious names, to the light of the world and the knowledge of men, where, so long as they last, they will record your greatness and virtues, and my sincere devotion. Ferrara, 20th November, 1580.”\*

His discourse on female virtue, in which he also takes occasion to praise the sisters, was probably written about the same period.

According to SERASSI, the DUCHESS of URBINO enjoyed these marks of TASSO's respect and gratitude, but LEONORA was no longer in a condition to favor the poet, or listen to his muse. Her health had long been declining, and soon gave signs of approaching dissolution. The last remaining trace of her lover's remembrance is preserved in the following letter. It is

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\* Lettere, tom. ii., p. 261.

directed to Father Francis Panigarola, then much celebrated for his eloquence.

“ I have heard, with the greatest satisfaction, that your reverence is in Ferrara, and I pray you to visit me, for to you permission will be readily granted whenever you please ; and if you cannot do me that kindness, at least be good enough to write to me. I have sent you many letters, but either they have not reached your hands, or your answers have not come to mine, for every other supposition is forbidden by your courtesy. I continue the same devoted servant and admirer of your reverence that I always was, and love you as I love few others, and as you are loved by few. If Madam LÉONORA’S health improves, as I most earnestly desire and hope, I pray your reverence most humbly to kiss her hands in my name, and say to her for me, that I have been deeply grieved at her illness, which I have not mourned in verse, from I know not what secret repugnance of spirit. But if in anything else I can serve her, she has but to command me ; I speak especially of poetry on more cheerful subjects.

“ To the serene lady DUCHESS I entreat my

respects, and remind her where I am. Live happy. From Ferrara.”\*

Nothing appears to show whether this letter was ever answered. The hopes of LEONORA'S recovery which it expresses were delusive. She passed soon after to a better life, in the forty-fourth year of her age, with all the marks of Christian piety and resignation. Her death is thus briefly recorded in the MS. annals of Ferrara.

“On the 10th of February, 1581, died MADAM LEONORA, daughter of Duke HERCULES II., who preferred a life of celibacy.”

She was lamented in a volume of poetry, where contributions may be found from nearly all the genius of her time and country. The name of TASSO alone is wanting. Serassi ascribes it to the jealousy of DUCCHI, who collected them, yet admits that no verses on that occasion exist among his author's writings, and elsewhere imputes TORQUATO'S silence to the magnitude of sufferings that admitted no new

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\* Lettere, tom. iv., p. 161.

grief, or the little interest taken by the Princess in his misfortunes, and her omission to solicit his release.\* Since the days of his biographer another half century has gone by, bringing to light many of the poet's compositions. But this page is still a blank. LAURA was wept by PETRARCH in a hundred sonnets.† From TASSO LEONORA received not one. The reasons of this silence, and of his former jealousy, as well as of her anger or indifference, are still a mystery. How far she returned his affection, those who have accompanied us to this point in our researches, are as competent to determine as ourselves. We affect no power to raise the cloudy veil of centuries any higher, and if we could, might possibly be inclined to drop it, after satisfying our own curiosity. Nor are we at all disposed to venture arguments with which few would be satisfied. The lapse of ages, and difference of country and customs, occasion endless variety in the judgments of

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\* Contrast the text of p. 298, with note 4 of p. 297, Serassi, Vita di Torquato Tasso.

† Not literally. The sonnets are but ninety; there are ten stanzas, however, in addition, besides the "Triumphs."



men, and as the world pardons everything to greatness, it is uncertain, at this day, taking it throughout, whether LEONORA would be more condemned for weakness than insensibility. For ourselves at least we will venture no opinion. The question is too grave for a jurisdiction so humble. We refer it to our fair readers; and in a matter so doubtful each may find plausible reasons for supposing in the Princess the just degree of rigor she would herself prefer. Even LEONORA's reputed piety, whence many will deduce a pure and constant love, unhappily admits of more than one interpretation. If the disappointment of earthly affections naturally turns the innocent heart to heaven, it is equally true that penance and austerity frequently close a life of pleasure; and no less certain that remorse of conscience has been pretended as an excuse for deserting one lover, by those who passed instantly to the arms of another. TASSO's affectionate recollection of the PRINCESS, almost in her last hours, is, however, a strong proof of her worth, and though we may not with Serassi believe her quite a saint, her religion was probably ardent and sincere.

Although the acknowledged works of TASSO alone have been resorted to for the materials of this essay, the following productions are too remarkable to be passed over in silence. They are among the manuscripts acquired by Count MARIANO ALBERTI of Rome, from the Prince FALCONIERI, and now in the course of publication. An endorsement on the first, in an ancient hand-writing, suggests that they were the very lines whose discovery subjected TORQUATO to the Duke's vengeance. Without entering into the question of their authenticity, which would be foreign to our plan, we submit them to the inspection of our readers :\*

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\* Since this was written, Count Alberti has greatly disappointed the expectations of his friends by publishing only a part of the alleged MSS. of TASSO in his possession.

Whatever may have been the *motive* for withholding others previously exhibited to many, and of which even written copies were in circulation, the *effect* has been to create a great diffidence in respect to the authenticity of the whole. The restraints on the press in Italy, however, render the publication of such papers so difficult that their suppression must not be judged harshly without full knowledge of all the circumstances, and it is not easy to resist the internal evidence of genuineness that some of them exhibit, especially the sonnet beginning "*Giurai Signor,*" etc., hereafter quoted.

The MSS. of TASSO acquired by Foppa, descended, it is

"O when shall I, with my own LEONORE,  
 Love's dear delights in liberty renew?  
 Has pitying fate indeed such joys in store?  
 Laurels, and lyre, and bashfulness adieu!"\*

"Of LIFE you may deprive me, mighty lord,  
 Such right from monarch's usurpation springs;  
 But REASON — gift of the ETERNAL WORD  
 To take from MAN because of LOVE he sings —  
 Of LOVE, by Heaven and Nature taught — absurd!  
 Nay worse, a crime — the worst of crimes in kings!  
 Pardon I craved — denied me or deferred,  
 I do repent my soul's repentant stings!"†

certain, to the Falconieri family, and existed in their library when Serassi wrote his life of the poet. It is equally clear that Foppa did not publish *all* the inedited poetry they contained, for he admits it in his preface. How much of it Count Alberti may have obtained from Prince Falconieri, is another question, not yet perhaps ripe for adjudication. See Serassi, *Vita di Tasso*, and Foppa, *Opere del Tasso non più stampate*.

\* "Quando sarà che d' ELEONORA mia  
 Possa godermi in libertade amore?  
 Ah! pietoso il destin tanto mi dia!  
 Addio cetra, addio lauri, addio rossore:\*

† "Tormi potrei, alto Signor la vita,  
 Chè de' monarchi e usurpato dritto;  
 Ma tormi quel, che la bonta infinita  
 Senno mi diè, perchè, d' AMORE HO SCRITTO,  
 E delitto maggior d' ogni delitto,  
 PARDON chiedei, tu mel negasti addio:  
 Mi pento ognor del pentimento mio."

“ TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND  
SERENE LORD DUKE.

I swore, my lord ! but my unworthy oath  
Was a base sacrilege which cannot bind,  
Since God alone, directs and governs both,  
The greatest of his works, the HUMAN MIND.  
REASON I hold from HIM. Who would not loathe  
Such gift, a pledge in Power's vile hands to find ?  
Do not forget, my lord, that even the sway  
Of sovereign KINGS has bounds at which it ends ;  
Past them they rule not, nor should we obey.  
He who to any mortal being bends  
One step beyond, sins 'gainst the light of day :  
Thus then, my soul her servile shackles rends !  
And my sound mind shall henceforth none obey  
But HIM whose reign o'er KINGS and worlds extends.”\*

- \* “ Giurai Signor, ma il giuramento mio  
Fu un' esecrando sacrilegio indegno  
Chè sol governa e sol dirige Iddio  
L' opra stupenda dell' umano ingegno  
Ciò ch' all' arbitrio suo serbò com' io  
Ceder a un vil poter mentito impegno ?  
E delitto Signor porre in obbligo  
Ch' anco al poter dei Ré prerutto e un segno ;  
Oltre quello non v' ha legge o diritti,  
Cessan del' uomo la potestà sovrano,  
E un passo solo è un impetato delitto.  
I ceppi io frango e in libertade intera,  
Rendo il dominio di mia mente sana  
A quel che ai Ré e all' universo impera.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

Nothing now remains but an inquiry into the state of TASSO's mind in the latter years of his confinement. Yet this is not without interest and difficulty. We have brought down our sketches of his history to the summer of 1581, and until that time, at least, the general effect of the evidence is clearly in favor of sanity. The circumstances contradicting it are few and weak, or susceptible of easy explanation.

Intending however, to state both sides of the question as fairly as possible, the following brief summary will show what parts of his correspondence impugn our own opinion. The letters to the Duke of Ferrara and the Gonzaga, on the subject of the inquisition at the time of his first imprisonment, have been already quoted at length. If his own explanation of his conduct about that period is to be credited, he feigned madness by command of the Duke, and com-

mitted excesses to win his favor. The strange style of those productions is thus accounted for. The strong suspicion of a disordered intellect they must have created in the mind of our readers, was not sought to be diminished by any artifice of ours. It yielded to the subsequent numerous and overwhelming proofs of sanity contained in the oration to the Duke of URBINO, his discourse to GONZAGA, his letters to BUONCOMPAGNO and the Cardinal ALBANO, and his addresses to the NOBLES and DEPUTIES of NAPLES. The only other symptoms occurring prior to the autumn of 1581, are those rather of melancholy or eccentricity than derangement, and are too slight to shake the conviction produced by the various wonderful efforts of his genius, of which we have in vain attempted to give our readers an idea by our feeble translations. To enable them, however, to form their own judgment on that point, instead of attempting to dictate to it, we will enumerate all that occur to us.

Writing to GONZAGA in 1576, on the 24th of March, he says :

“Your lordship will find a letter enclosed

which was written to me from Poland by M. ASCANIO.\* I know that he spoke of me and my poem at great length to the Duke, and hence my humors of last year had their origin."†

This refers to his melancholy and fears in 1575, when he went before the inquisition at Bologna. But it has already been observed, that the first rumor of insanity does not meet us until the attack on the servant of the Duchess of URBINO, in June, 1577, two years afterwards.

In a letter of his to Giovanni Battista Barile, dated 20th July, 1578, he says :

"I am at Pesara, where, notwithstanding a most friendly reception from the Duke of URBINO and courteous treatment by all the nobles, I cannot tranquillize my mind, because here, also, it seems to me to be desired that I should understand and converse by signs, and I being a reasonable creature, on whom nature has not

\* Ascanio Giraldini, before mentioned.

† Lettere, tom. iii., 93, 94.

only conferred the gift of speech, but (unless self-love deceives me) the power to speak properly, will not do such wrong to myself as to signify my thoughts by gesture like a dumb brute; so far from it, that I desire to publish them not only by words but in writing, that they may be known to men now and for ever.”\*

The rest of this letter, which is a long one, shows not the least mark of an unsound mind; and, resisted as that supposition is by the many strong proofs already cited, it is more reasonable to imagine that, in fact, he was treated as he himself declares, either because the report of his madness was believed, or because the court of Urbino thought it prudent to affect a belief in it.

His apology to the Cardinal ALBANO for distrusting him has been already noticed, and considering the treachery he had suffered, and the danger he had incurred, may be regarded as evincing merely a suspicious turn of mind, but too natural in his unhappy condition, and which

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\* *Lettere Inedite*, p. 47, vol. xviii., at the end of *Controversie*, ed. di Pisa.



he immediately atoned for to the utmost of his power. Writing to his sister Cornelia, on the 14th February, 1581, he says :

“ I believe there is no other impediment to my liberation but the opinion which perhaps my LORD DUKE entertains of my eccentricity, (*umore*,) and, therefore, to satisfy him of that, whereof it seems to me he might be already well satisfied that I will run into no folly, I am ready to take medicine, and submit to any regimen except water, which you know I refused even in your own house, and which you kindly permitted me to refuse.”

This prepossession, or affectation of the Duke's respecting his madness, or wish that he should *seem* mad, is no proof against TASSO, in whom it might be prudent to refer to it thus cautiously. His dislike of water was invincible, as it still is with many of his countrymen, who think that beverage unwholesome ; and besides it is sufficiently obvious that TORQUATO preferred wine.\* With these explanations

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\* Lettere, tom. i., 149; iii., 276.

there is nothing in the letter to raise a doubt. He goes on to instruct his sister respecting the best mode of soliciting his release, tells her what help she may expect, and what means she should employ, and concludes by saying :

“ I write these things to you, thus minutely, not only because distance depriving me of your conversation, I like to write familiarly as I would speak if you were present, but because I wish you to be informed what friendships and acquaintance and dependence I have, as well as of those things which some call humors, and which, whatever they may be, and called by what name you please, it seems to me might be easily tolerated anywhere, even in court itself.”\*

This letter, it would appear, never reached his sister, for in writing to her afterwards, on the 15th of April, he says :

“ You appear not to know that I am in prison ; and perhaps neither the manner nor

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\* *Lettere*, tom. v., pp. 71, 73.

description of my confinement is known to the Duke of FERRARA, nor the Duchess of URBINO, but I am kept here at the pleasure of\* . . . into whose power, thinking to do me a service, I was led by Monsignore† . . . and he uses all kind of rigor and inhumanity against me, contrary to the faith pledged to me by Monsignore above mentioned, and disfavors me in everything, especially in my studies, and in writing, and in printing my works, in which I most wish to be helped and favored.”‡

If the reference here is, as we believe, to the Cardinal d' ESTE, and the Cardinal ALBANO, this statement, far from being indicative of insanity, corresponds with what seems to have been TASSO's ultimate conviction, and to us still appears the most probable conjecture, namely, that the Cardinal of ESTE was even more vindictive than the Duke.

In his letter to Cardinal ALBANO, dated the 23d of May, 1581, and already quoted entire,

\* Probably Cardinal d' Este.

† Cardinal Albano.

‡ Lettere, tom. i., p. 215.

in which he reasons with great force and clearness upon the cruelty and absurdity of detaining him in prison as a madman, Tasso excuses himself for striking his keeper two years before, by saying he did it believing the man desired to be struck by him. The similarity of this apology with that made for speaking insolently of the Duke, namely, that not only others, but the Duke himself desired it, savors somewhat of the fixed ideas, and single trains of thought, applied indifferently to every one, by persons of a disordered intellect. Yet it is more than possible that the keeper, to avoid the suspicion of collusion with his prisoner, or to cover some indulgence granted or purchased, may have suggested the expediency of a feigned quarrel. If this conjecture is not admissible, we are thrown back upon the weight of conflicting evidence, and the question how far these comparatively slight circumstances can overbalance the proofs of judgment, learning, and sagacity, displayed during that period in his works.

Another difficulty arises from his dialogue "*Il Messaggero*." This was written in 1580, and he there introduces a familiar spirit, the same, he says, who appeared to him *four* years

previous, and whose conversation assuredly rather soars above, than falls beneath, the ordinary standard of human genius.\* It would appear that this imaginary colloquy was afterwards urged as a proof of his insanity, for in writing to CATANEO in 1584, he says, "but perhaps I may seem to contradict myself, because in the dialogue of 'THE MESSENGER,' I feigned to converse with a spirit, which I never would have done, even if I could have had the power. But you must know that dialogue was composed by me several years ago, at the command of a prince† who perhaps had no evil intention, nor did I esteem it wrong or dangerous to treat the subject thus poetically. But since then, my enemies making a mockery of me, have brought me to the extremity of wretchedness, rendering that in part true which I had but fancied," etc.‡

Such are the strongest grounds that occurred to us in the course of our investigations, for

\* See the Dialogue, tom. i. Dialoghi, p. 50, vol. vii., ed. di Pisa.

† Probably the Prince of Mantua.

‡ See the whole letter, post.

sometimes doubting TASSO's entire sanity, and we fear not to expose them frankly in contrast with the different proofs of a contrary character, which in the end produced an opposite conviction. To countervail these doubts, besides the number and excellence of his works in verse and prose, and his own irresistible arguments on the question, we have an extensive correspondence with his friends during the whole time from 1575 to 1581. There are letters to CATANEO of the 28th of March, 25th of June, and 28th of July; to his sister of the 16th of June, and to Cardinal ALBANO of the 7th or 17th of June, and 9th of August in the latter year, none of which exhibit symptoms of derangement.

To CATANEO, on the 28th of March, he writes :

“ It is two years since your reverence, by the authority of Cardinal ALBANO, led me to Ferrara, where I found no one who appeared to know any thing of all that you had written to me. A few days before the expiration of the two years, Count Hercules Tassone brought me a letter from my sister, and read me another, written, if I remember rightly, from the Car-

dinal to himself. I have not seen him since, and although I have more than once written to the Cardinal, I have received no answer," etc:

He prays CATANEO to procure the influence of the republic of Venice, "so that the commerce of letters may be opened to him."

On the 16th June he sends his sister a sonnet on Don JOHN of AUSTRIA, to be shown to divers noble personages, with whom he prays her to intercede for his liberty, which a sister may with propriety do for a brother.

"Of myself, and my condition," he continues, "I know not what else to write to you save that I am sick and in prison, and desirous of liberty. My faults have been mercifully punished by our LORD GOD; of men I will not speak — may it please his Divine Providence to remind them that they are of mortal birth, and that I too was born a man, and would die so!"

This apostrophe alludes, no doubt, to his imputed madness. It is remarkable that neither in this, nor in the preceding letter to this sister,

nor in any other part of his correspondence, is the slightest reference to be found to the death of LEONORA.\*

In his letter to Cardinal ALBANO of the 17th June, he says :

“ Count Hercules Tassone brought me, last month, a letter from my sister, which suggests to me the recovery of part of my mother’s fortune. Afterwards, not many days ago, in the presence of the Prince of MANTUA, he gave me another, and at the same time one from Signore MAURIZIO, your secretary, to which I replied, and would have given my answer to the Count if he had returned. I know not what to add to my first letter, unless it be that I am disposed, not merely from my own inclinations, but also from the counsel of your Signore MAURIZIO, to write and speak willingly with all honor of the Duke of FERRARA, and if Count HERCULES will show you the copy of a work on nobility which I gave to the Prince

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\* As the Princess died on the 10th, he might not have heard of it on the 14th of February, but it is scarcely to be supposed he remained ignorant of it on the 16th June.



of MANTUA, you will see that I have not written otherwise of his highness than as a devoted servant ought. In like manner I will write another of dignity, which I would send your lordship if I knew how, and so much for what you advise me respecting the Duke of FERRARA. The other princes I will honor to the utmost of my power, or at least force myself not to offend.

“ Will your lordship think how far, by honoring, rather than not offending them, I may be able to obtain my liberty, and think also of my present state and my past? I sent this morning to my sister a sonnet on Don JOHN of AUSTRIA, that it might be shown to Signore MAURIZIO. I pray your lordship would deign to read it, and remind the Duchess to expedite my liberation. From Ferrara in Sant’ Anna, 7th June, 1581.”\*

Writing to MAURIZIO CATANEO, on the 25th June, he mentions the letter from his sister,

\* The date of this letter, as given in the printed works, is as above, but as the sonnet is mentioned as having been sent to his sister in the letter of the 16th, before cited, it is obvious that the true date of that to the Cardinal is the 17th. *Lettere*, tom. v., p. 74.

and the dialogues on nobility and dignity, as well as his belief that "the Cardinal could open to him the commerce of letters;" "and if there has been any impediment put to it, as I suspect, without the knowledge of the Duke, the Cardinal's authority is such that he could easily remove it, not only because it has been so affirmed to me by many, but also because my own reason persuades me of it. I cannot believe that the Duke is informed of the nature of my malady, which never can be cured in this prison, and I fear, if they are much longer delayed, all remedies will be in vain. I therefore pray the Cardinal, that the more desirous he is of my health, the more solicitous he will be for my freedom," etc.\*

On the 28th July he writes to Cataneo thus :

"Since the Count Hercules brought me my sister's last letter, I have written to you so often that you will readily pardon me if I forget not only the number of the letters, but their con-

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\* *Lettere*, tom. v., pp. 75, 76, ed. di Pisa.

tents. This at least I remember, that I prayed your Lord Cardinal to make interest for my liberation, to the end that before the coming autumn I may go to the baths, and I now remind you of it, and pray you to solicit his lordship, for it is a question affecting my life, which will be in great peril if speedy remedy be not found for my illness. I beg to recall to your remembrance the affair of the privileges;\* for those of Lucca you may speak in my name to the good Philip de' Nobili. Salute our friends, and our Lord God be with you. From Ferrara in Sant' Anna."†

He tells Cardinal ALBANO on the 9th of August, that

"Signore Alexander Pocaterra will inform your lordship of my willingness to write and please the Duke of FERRARA, as far as possible in my weak and infirm condition, and at the same time, of the desire I have to be at liberty, without which there is no hope of health for me.

\* Probably for printing his works.

† Lettere, tom. v., p. 76.

May your lordship's authority cause the one to be known and the other to be fulfilled, etc. Your lordship may be assured that I am more desirous of writing and pleasing the Duke than all others of his house. From Ferrara, in Sant' Anna."

Confinement in a lunatic hospital, in a cell like Tasso's, occasioned by such causes, and surrounded by such objects, must have greatly increased his habitual despondency. We ought not to wonder if it really drove him mad; the marvel rather is, that he should have continued sane. Before, however, attributing any effect to his seclusion or pronouncing on its character, as everything respecting it is disputed, even the nature of his detention and treatment, a few extracts from his own letters, respecting them, will not be useless.

His affecting description of "the indignities to which he was exposed, the squalor of his beard, and hair, and clothes, and the sordid filth and misery around him," cannot be forgotten.\*

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\* Letter to Scipio Gonzaga, ante, p. 69.

He complains to BUONCOMPAGNO, in 1581, of the harsh treatment he suffers from Agostino Mosti, the prior of the hospital.\*

It appears that his correspondence was entirely cut off, until Giulio Mosti, the nephew of the prior, became his friend, and he repeatedly entreats "to be restored to the commerce of letters."†

Writing to GUALENGO, 29th September, 1582, he prays a little more comfort, and promises not to forget it if he should come to better fortune.‡

In 1583, he wishes to converse with CATANEO in private, being unwilling to confide secrets to letters. In the same year, having lost, together with his salary, all the profit he hoped from printing his works, he is entirely at the mercy of the ministers, although he often has occasion to put his hand in his purse for necessities.§

In 1584, he begs Father GRILLO that he

\* Letter to Buoncompagno, ante, pp. 78, 79.

† Lettere, tom. iv., p. 165.

‡ Id. 169.

§ Id. 294.

may be allowed to confess, which he is anxious to do, but it does not depend on him, but on M. Agostino Mosti, the prior of the hospital, who not only permits him to be annoyed by his neighbors and disturbed in his studies, but who himself treats him in many respects in an unbecoming manner; "so that the greatest favor I could receive from your fraternity, would be to take me out of his hands."\*

In 1585, he says, "I write not from prison but from St. Benedict, where Count Giulio Pepoli brought me in his carriage, and I hope from him similar favors hereafter."†

In the same year he complains of being re-imprisoned after temporary indulgence.‡

In 1586, he says, he is sick and in prison, and from the quarter whence he hoped liberty comes first confinement.§

\* Vol. ix., ed. di Venezia, p. 24.

† Lettere, tom. i., p. 87, ed. di Pisa.

‡ Id. 61.

§ Lettere, tom. ii., p. 72. The allusion possibly may be to Tuscany.

To these may be added Aldus's testimony to his "*sense, hunger, and nakedness.*" See Serassi, 314, n. 4.

Many of his sonnets describe his prison and the misery he suffers there ; and after making all due allowance for poetic exaggeration, we cannot recognise in them either the commodious and pleasant apartments of MANSO, or the humane detention of BLACK.\* The following to SCIPIO GONZAGA, may be taken as a specimen :

" Sure PITY, SCIPIO, on earth has fled  
From Royal breasts to seek abode in heaven ;  
For if she were not banished, scorned, or dead,  
Would not some ear to my complaints be given ?  
Is NOBLE FAITH at pleasure to be riven,  
Though freely pledged that I had naught to dread,  
And I by endless outrage to be driven  
To worse than DEATH — the death-like life I've led ?  
For this is of the quick a GRAVE ; and here  
Am I, a living, breathing corpse interred,  
To go not forth 'till prisoned in my bier ;  
O earth ! O heaven ! if Love and Truth are heard,  
Or Honor, Fame, and Virtue worth a tear,  
Let not my prayers be fruitless or deferred !"<sup>†</sup>

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\* Black, vol. ii., Appendix xxviii., p. 452.

† Rime, tom. iii., s. 48, p. 29, ed. di Pisa.

" AL SIGNOR SCIPIO GONZAGA,  
SULLA SUA PRIGIONIA.

Scipio, o pietade è morta, od è bandita  
Da regj petti, e nel celesto regno

Various other descriptions to the same purport might be quoted, but the reader will probably be better contented with a reference.\*

In these, as well as in his prose writings already cited, he is consistent in affirming that "FAITH WAS FLEDGED TO HIM," and that he returned "confiding in the promises made by Cardinal ALBANO and the gentlemen of the Duke."†

Fra' Divi alberga, e prende il mondo a sdegno,  
O fia la voce del mio pianto udità.  
Dunque la nobil fe sarà schernita,  
Ch'è di mia libertà sì nobil pegno;  
Nè fine avrà mai questo strazio indegno,  
Che m' inforsa così tra morte e vita?  
Questa è tomba de' vivi, ov io son chiuso  
Cadavero spirante, e sì disserra  
Solo il carcer de' morti: Oh, Divi, Oh, Cielo.  
S' opere d' arte e d' ingegno, amore, zelo  
D' onore, han premio ovver perdono in terra,  
Deh! non sia, prego, il mio pregar deluso."

\* See sonnet to the Cardinal Albano, Rime, tom. iii., s. 77, p. 43; to Vincenzo Gonzaga, id., s. 83, p. 46; to the shade of Duke Hercules, id., s. 85, p. 47; to Duke William of Mantua, id., 159, s. 106, 109, p. 60, s. 110, 111; canzone xxvi., Rime, tom. iv., p. 94; canzone xiv., tom. ii., p. 40, and various other compositions.

† See sonnet to Scipio Gonzaga, "la nobil fe" — "chi mi guido" — "chi mi deluse," in the canzone to the Princesses, and



Until the summer or autumn of 1581, then, he seems to have struggled with his miseries, buoyed up occasionally with the hopes of freedom, and, however melancholy, still rational. But we now approach a period when he exhibited numerous and serious marks of a distemper resembling madness, and, indeed, only distinguishable from it by the greater exactness of modern science.

The first decided symptoms of this malady which attracted our attention, are observable in a letter to CATANEO, dated the 18th of October, 1581, but little more than two months after that to the Cardinal Albano.\*

“ *To Signore Maurizio Cataneo ; Rome.*

“ Although I desire more earnestly to be thought good than learned, yet it would displease me to be reputed ignorant. And if virtue is science, and without knowledge no

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“ *la data fede,*” in the sonnet to Margherita Gonzaga, Duchess of Ferrara, Rime, tom. i., s. 426. See also, lettere, tom. i., p. 78, 169 ; tom. ii., 175, 197, 274 ; tom. iv., 196 ; *Lettere Inedite*, 64.

\* Ante, p. 195.

perfect action can be performed, I ought to value the reputation of learning as much as that of goodness itself. If it shall please God, therefore, to grant me life, I will strive to efface from the minds of men the belief that to my misfortune, and through the malignity of others, has been spread abroad. But as it is not in my power to correct it entirely, for the present I will only give you an account of the interruptions I meet with in studying and composing. These are of two sorts, human and diabolical. The human are cries of men, and especially of women and children; laughter full of mockery; noises of various animals, excited by men to annoy me, and sounds of inanimate things produced by mortal agency. The diabolical are enchantments and witchcraft. As to the enchantments I am not so certain, because the rats, of which my room is full, and who appear to me possessed, may make the noise they do naturally without any diabolical art, and the origin of the other sounds I hear may also be traced to human means. Nevertheless, it appears to me sufficiently certain that I am bewitched, and the spells are very powerful. For when I take a book or a

pen, I hear voices sounding in my ears, among which I distinguish the names of Paul, James, Jerome, Francis, Fulvius, and others, which perhaps are those of evil spirits envious of my quiet. For if they are not such, they would seek by courtesy to remove the evil opinion I have conceived of them from their acts. Although I often write before eating, I am more troubled with fumes that ascend to the head than I have ever been heretofore, insomuch that I am often disturbed by phantasms. Such being my condition, it is no wonder that in writing to your Cardinal I improperly used the term 'instruments of the understanding,' but rather that I have not committed many other errors. And when it happens, as it very often does, that external interruptions concur with these internal ones, they enrage me to such a degree that very often I do not finish my letters, but tear them to pieces and begin them again, as I have done with this, of which I have torn and re-written many copies. Others I have penned very hastily, and sent from my hands immediately without correction, in which, if I have committed mistakes, they ought to be imputed by the courteous reader more to trouble

than ignorance. For in thinking over what I have written, my blunders occur to me very readily, but after they can no longer be corrected, and this frets me exceedingly. In this perturbation of spirit, not only my letters, but my other productions have been composed, so that I do not merely hesitate to pronounce them good, but will never acknowledge them for mine until I have time to revise them. Because, not such as spring from a disturbed, but those that are the fruit of a quiet mind, are properly to be accounted mine. Besides this, some others have been badly written for many reasons, which, if I live, I will recompose and enlarge.

“Such was one sent two years ago to the EMPEROR, and others to the most serene Duchess of MANTUA, and to the most illustrious SCIPIO GONZAGA, to which, not having been able to give the form of an oration, I intended this last year to extend into many orations, containing the several proofs of the numerous calamities I have suffered, and the wrongs I have endured, as well as the nature of my faults, which do not deserve the punishment my enemies think them worthy of, and perhaps are lighter than their own. But, deterred by the

fatigue, and the obstacles I have met with, I have given over writing them, or rather postponed it to a better opportunity, and now the division I had made of the subject has escaped my mind, for my memory has been much impaired by this illness. I should like to remember them, if I do not reconsider many, and divide them differently. But if your illustrious lord, who has always most prudently advised me, thinks I would do better to forget the injuries I have done to others, and they to me, than by writing to revive them in my memory and theirs, I will freely consent that the past may rest in silence.

“ I pray, nevertheless, that my reputation and quiet may be recommended to his lordship, and expect his counsel, without which I am unwilling to do anything. And that in giving it to me he may be sure of what I can promise for myself, know, that when I am not disturbed by such noises as those, that even at this moment have not ceased, and which are enough to drive even wise men mad, and when I have taken proper remedies, and am nourished by proper food, such as does not increase my melancholy, I do not despair of being fit to fill

the office of a secretary. And sure I am it would rarely be necessary for me to transcribe my letters, and never more than once. Still it is a place I do not wish for. And if I could get the two thousand five hundred crowns justly due me in the kingdom of Naples, and a thousand or more which it seems to me Signore\* . . . is my debtor, if I should receive but half of what has been made by the publications of my poem, I would think only of attending to my studies, not so much from the hope of fame, as the wish for peace, which may it please heaven to grant me on any terms. And I kiss your hands. From Ferrara."†

What renders this description of his situation still more curious is, that on the seventh and eleventh of the same month he wrote two long letters to Brother Mark, a Capuchin friar, who pretended that heaven had revealed to him all Tasso's thoughts. The poet, waiving a discussion on miracles, on which it is impossible to reason, argues sensibly, and even acutely,

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\* Probably Febo Bonnà.

† Lettere, tom. iv., p. 156.

but in courteous and friendly terms, on the natural impossibility of what the friar tells him. These letters are excluded with regret, on account of their length, but the learned reader will not fail to consult them.\*

In December, 1581, writing to ALDUS the younger, who contemplated printing an edition of his poems, he says :

“ I will send you the rhymes, but it will take two months to arrange and get them ready, and my labor will be all in vain if I do not first take medicine, and attend to my health very carefully, for which purpose I want the advice of Signore MERCURIALE.”†

Such of his letters as we have in 1582, exhibit no further symptoms of a disordered fancy. He merely says, in the course of a long and sensible one to GONZAGA :

“ For I am tired, and almost sick of the world, and desirous of nothing so much as

\* See Lettere, tom. ii., 133, 137.

† A celebrated physician of Padua. Lettere, tom. v., p. 139.

quiet, not destitute of reputation ; which, however, I do not mean to seek with much care or study, but would not lose more of than I have done already by my folly, for the loss is irremediable, and causes me infinite grief.”\*

In 1583 he consulted the celebrated JEROM MERCURIALE, professor of medicine in the University of PADUA :

“I have been sick now some years, and the nature of my disease is unknown even to myself ; yet it is my firm belief I have been bewitched. But whatever may be the cause of the malady, these are the effects. Pain in the intestines, with slight dysentery ; buzzing in the ears and head, so strong that I sometimes seem to have a clock in it ; continual fancies of different kinds, but all disagreeable, which often disturb me to such a degree that I cannot apply myself for five minutes at a time ; and the more I strive to force my attention, the more I am distracted by various imaginations, and sometimes by the

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\* Lettere, tom. iv., p. 304, ed. di Pisa. Letter to Scipio Gonzaga, dated 26th October, 1582.



violent passions they excite, according to the nature of the phantasies that occur. Besides this, after meals I am troubled with fumes in the head, which is greatly heated, and in all the sounds I hear I fancy human voices, so that things inanimate often seem to speak to me. At night I am disturbed by dreams, and so carried away by imagination that I appear to have heard (if indeed I have not really heard) some things respecting which I have conferred with Father Mark, a Capuchin, the bearer hereof, and other fathers and laics with whom I have conversed about my disease, which being in this respect not only violent, but afflicting above all others, has need of some powerful remedy. And though no cure can be expected without the help of God, who never abandons those that firmly believe in him, yet as divine grace permits the use of human means to human infirmities, I recur to you for help and counsel, and pray you, if you cannot send the remedies, at least to write your advice, which I always held in great esteem, and would now prefer to that of most others. The greater my need and misery, the greater will be my obligation, if, through your assistance, I shall recover my

health. And though at present not only in that respect, but in all others, I am in the worst condition, nevertheless, by the mercy of our Lord, there remains to me so much of my wonted intellect that I am not unable to compose ; and in that way you may expect from me every sort of gratitude. If you do, or ought to wish for any reward from me, it is this, which will never be sought in vain, but on the contrary often paid without being asked. I should like also to know Signore Melchior Guilandino's opinion, and pray you to remember me most warmly to Signore John Vincent Pinello, who has been many years, and still is, near my heart. From Ferrara, the vigil of St. Peter, 1583."\*

In one of his letters to CATANEO in this year, there is a remarkable passage. He says he is aware that it was through his own imprudence he fell into the calamity from which he has not yet entirely escaped, although the Duke and Duchess have shown such courtesy to him,

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\* Lettere, tom. v., p. 260, ed. di Pisa.

both in words and actions, as to give him hopes of entirely recovering their favor.\*

On the first of October in the same year he writes to Biagio Bernardi as follows :

“ On your return I will answer the sonnet of Signore Humajo, as I am bound to do by his courtesy. Nor is it singular that I take time to reply, because PHOEBUS is niggardly to me, having found the art of printing and selling my works, which I hoped to do myself, he spends his time gaily in Paris among ladies and cavaliers, without giving me any of the money he receives for them, as he had promised to do under his hand.† But if Signore Humajo

\* Lettere, tom. iv., p. 180, ed. di Pisa.

† Doubtless a play was intended upon the name of PHOEBUS BONNA, and upon the word *art*, used either in the letter of his correspondent Bernardi, or the sonnet of Humajo.

This FEBO BONNA contrived to get the privilege of printing the Jerusalem from the Pope, the King of France, the Doge of Venice, the Duke of Ferrara, and the Governor of Milan. The original edition of 1581 is before me, with the copy of each at full length. Bonna was a Ferrarese, and the use he made of these privileges is obvious enough from Tasso's words. The poet frequently complains in his correspondence of the injustice done him by printing his works without giving him any part of the profit.

means a different Phoebus and different art, I will gladly hear his opinion thereon, because those who will have poetry to be a divine fury, inspired by APOLLO and the MUSES, do not allow it to be an art, as you may perceive, in the

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The want of concert on this subject among the different governments of Italy continues to this day to be a serious discouragement to letters, and a crying injustice to authors. If a work is bad, it falls of course. If good, editions are multiplied in the adjoining states, from which the publishers alone derive all the benefit. Such at least is the general rule. There are occasional honorable exceptions of conscientious booksellers, who think themselves bound to make some recompense, but this of course must be trifling. An author in Italy, therefore, can scarcely ever expect profit.

With what justice, then, are the Italians reproached for their neglect of literature? When this, and all the other obstacles they must encounter, are considered, the wonder is that any one writes at all. Nor is this evil confined to Italy. French works are printed surreptitiously in Belgium, English in France, American in England, and English in America. How long shall *literary piracy* be the only one tolerated by civilized nations? Why do not Great Britain and the United States set the example of a compact to secure the rights of intellectual property? One of the most glorious and useful triumphs of civilization would be the establishment of free trade—an uniformity of weights, measures, and money, and the universal security of copy-right and invention throughout Christendom. A congress for this purpose would redeem the name from odium, and such an alliance would be indeed holy.

IONE of PLATO. Be that as it may, of two things I assure you. One is, that I am not of those poets who do not understand what they themselves write ; the other, that my productions cost me much labor, which those are not wont to undergo who compose in poetic ecstasies ; and it is so much the greater as it is in part new to me, for before my memory was weakened I rarely put pen to paper, but could retain and repeat three or four hundred stanzas at once, and now I can hardly remember a sonnet ; and if it has not been recently made, forget it entirely, so that from this cause, and the number of my griefs, I no longer take the same pleasure in my studies that I used to do.

“You will therefore excuse me, if I send you nothing new except perhaps a sonnet, that it will not be tedious to copy. And if you think that Signore Mercuriale’s skill may restore me the memory I have lost, or even preserve to me the little that remains, I shall be greatly obliged both to you and him. I have received his advice in writing, and am willing to let blood and submit to a cautery in the arm, as he advises. But the one in the leg and the abstinence from wine, which he recommends, are

too disagreeable—I mean to abstain entirely, and drink nothing else but broth; because I would willingly obey him in using wine moderately and temperately. I pray you, therefore, if you return here, to help Count Camillo to cure me, or at least preserve my life, before you go to Padua. And if you will give me the receipt for the conserve that Signore MERCURIALE wishes me to take, it will be greatly welcome; and the more so the pleasanter it is, because you know, the excellence of a physician consists in giving not merely salutary but agreeable prescriptions. Remind Signor MERCURIALE, therefore, that I am infirm; for though I eat with a good appetite, in other respects I am much troubled. In the mean time, accept my respects and wishes for your health. From Ferrara, 1st October, 1583.”

An extract from a letter of his to the Cavalier ENEAS TASSO, in 1585, shows the increase of his belief in supernatural agency as the source of his torments.

. . . . . “Things become even worse; because the devil, with whom I walk

and sleep, not being able to master me as he wishes, has become a manifest thief of my money, taking it from me while I am asleep, and opening my boxes so that I cannot keep it safe. Heretofore he has robbed me discreetly, but not being able to trust his continuing to do so, I send you the rest. . . . I pray you to acknowledge the receipt of it, and to exert yourself that I may escape from the hands of the devil with my books and papers, of which I can no more be secure than of my money. And if the thing were not so certain, and so strange, and extraordinary, as to move pity of itself, I would add my entreaties on account of the intimacy between our fathers, etc. Sant' Anna, 10th November, 1585."\*

Writing to Cataneo the year following, he says :

"You must know I have been bewitched and have never been cured, and perhaps I have more need of an exorcist than a physician, because the disease comes from magic," etc.

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\* Lettere, tom. ii., p. 90, ed. di Pisa.

. . . . . "Of the foletto [or spirit,]\* I must write you something more. The little rogue has stolen many crowns from me ; I don't know how many, not keeping account of them like misers, but perhaps they may amount to twenty. He turns my books upside down, opens my chests, and steals my keys, so that I can keep nothing. I am miserable at all times, but especially during the night, and I know not whether my disease be phrenzy or what is its nature, nor can I find any other remedy than eating heartily and indulging my appetite, that I may sleep soundly. As to food indeed, by the grace of God, I can eat abundantly, for the magician's object seems not to have been to prevent my digestion, but my contemplations. Often, however, I fast, not from devotion, but fulness of stomach, and at such times I cannot sleep. Look upon me with compassion, and know that I am miserable because the world is unjust."†

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\* The foletto seems to be a sort of Sprite, Puck, or Robin Goodfellow.

† *Lettere*, tom. ii., p. 174; *Black*, vol. ii., 175; the date is Christmas day, [1586,] according to *Black*.



The longest and most circumstantial account of the spirit is in the following letter to Cataneo :

“To-day, which is the last but one of the year, the Reverend Father Licino’s brother brought me your two letters, but one of them disappeared after I read it, and I believe the foletto must have carried it off, because it is the one that speaks of him. This is one of the wonders I have often seen in this hospital. Hence I am certain they are the work of a magician, and I have many proofs of it, but especially of a loaf taken visibly from before my eyes half an hour before sunset, and a plate of fruit, which vanished the day that the Polish youth who is so deservedly admired, visited me. The same thing has happened with other provisions, at a time, too, when nobody entered my prison, and with gloves, letters, and books, taken from locked chests and found in the morning on the floor. Others I have never found, nor do I know what has become of them; but such as have disappeared when I am absent may have been taken by men, who I verily believe have the keys of all my trunks. Thus, you see, I can defend nothing against

my enemies or the devil, except my will, with which I will never consent to learn anything from himself or his magicians. FICINO says, they may move the imagination, but without the intellect have no authority or force, because that depends immediately upon God. The same thing may be gathered from many philosophers, both Platonists and Peripatetics. Alexander Aphrodisiensis especially, will not allow that the imagination is mistress of man's judgment, but that he is free to listen or not listen to it, having command over his fancy. But perhaps, some may think I contradict myself, because in my dialogue of the MESSENGER, I feigned to converse with a spirit, which I never would have done, even if I could have had the power. But you must know, that dialogue was composed by me several years ago, at the command of a prince who, perhaps, had no evil intention, nor did I esteem it wrong or dangerous to treat the subject thus poetically. But since then, my enemies making a mockery of me, have brought me to the extremity of wretchedness, rendering that in part true which I had but fancied. At the period referred to, I was not subject to

any misery of this sort, as may be learned from a strict examination of the gentlemen in whose houses I lodged. My proofs, however, must be drawn more from reasoning than testimony, though evidence would not be wanting were not the truth oppressed by my enemies, who are many, powerful, and implacable, and whom I seek not to appease, except by means becoming a Christian. For, God knows, I was never either magician or Lutheran, and I never read heretical books, nor works on necromancy, or any prohibited art. Nor did I ever delight in the conversation of Huguenots, nor praise their doctrines, but often blamed them by words and writings. Nor did I hold opinions against the holy catholic church, though I will not deny having sometimes lent too ready an ear to the reasoning of philosophers, but never in such wise as not to humble my intellect before theologians and to be more ready to learn than to contradict. But now my wretchedness has confirmed my faith, and amid all my misfortunes I have the consolation to be free from doubts, though I have many wishes. And if the fear of death has ever forced me to wrong myself or truth, such terror has now no influ-

ence, for I love not life, except attended with such things as might be granted by a gracious prince, who would be willing to annul the memory of falsehood and let truth remain, not for the purpose of blaming others, but for his satisfaction and my own. In the meantime, I am unhappy, nor will I conceal my misery in order that you may remedy it with all your power, and all your industry, and all your faith. Know then that beside the wonders of the foletto, which I reserve for future correspondence, I have many nocturnal frights. For even when awake, I seem to behold small flames in the air, and sometimes my eyes flash fire in such a way that I dread the loss of sight, and I have actually seen sparks of fire issue from them. I have also seen in the middle of the bed-tester shadows of rats, which it was naturally impossible should be there. I have heard dreadful noises, and there is often hissing, tingling, ticking like a clock, and ringing of bells in my ears. Often the hour is struck, and sometimes in my sleep it seems as if a horse fell upon me, and I afterwards found myself languid and fatigued. I have been afraid of epilepsy, apoplexy, and blindness. I am subject to headaches, but not

excessive, and to pains in the intestines, the side, the legs and thighs, but not very violent, and have been weakened by vomiting, dysentery, and fever.

“In the midst of these fears and sufferings, there appeared to me the image of the glorious Virgin in the air, with her son in her arms, surrounded by a halo of various colors, so that I ought not to despair of her grace. And though this might easily be a phantasy, because I am frenetic and disturbed by various phantasms, and infinitely melancholy, nevertheless, by the grace of God, I can sometimes withhold my assent, [*cohibere assensum*,] which, as CicerO remarks, is the operation of a sound mind; and therefore I incline to believe it a miracle of the Virgin. But, if I am not deceived, my frenzy is owing to some confections I ate three years ago, since from that period I date this new disease, which succeeded to the first, arising from a similar cause, but neither so long nor so difficult to cure, for this, if it be not incurable, very much resembles such as are never cured. Since then, the spells have been again renewed, yet no provision has been made for curing me any more than at first.

“ Though I have a good appetite I am rather choice in food and wish it to be delicate ; my digestion does not seem impaired, and I often sleep long and quietly, yet I do not think my life safe, and the evil is so wonderful that it might deceive the most skilful physicians, and therefore I esteem it the work of magic. It would be a mercy, therefore, to release me from this place, where the enchanterers are allowed to do what they please with me without fear of punishment, either because they are favored by persons in power, or because my lord Duke will not believe a word I say, although I never told his highness a falsehood, or spoke with intent to deceive him, or with any other unbecoming a gentleman. And if I could not depart with some proof of his bounty, which is most needed by me, I would still go at all events. Remember Signor MAURIZIO, that I have lived forty years and more, twenty of which have been spent in the service of the house of ESTE and in prison . . . . \*

It is time, therefore, to put an end to these hopes either with despair or with mercy, which

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\* Blank in the printed copies.

latter would more befit their greatness, and my character, and that of my faults, of which part are to be imputed to fortune, another part to nature, and part to the arts and violence of my enemies, so that my own portion is the smallest and slightest of all. And if the faults committed by youth are to be excused, mine are most excusable; if those followed by immediate repentance merit pardon, mine have deserved it many years. They ought not, therefore, to be remembered anew after my penitence, their promises, and your intercession, or if they are, they should be classed, not among the deliberate but the unintended — not among the wilful but the involuntary, so that I might expect not merely pardon but favor. And if my illustrious lord\* could have procured me the favor of speaking to the Duke, I would have prayed him to grant me life, restore me health, set me at liberty, and repair by his generosity the injuries I have suffered during many years' imprisonment, and to console me by his kindness for the wrongs that have been done me. What more worthy favor could your Lord Cardinal

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\* Cardinal ALBANO.

do, what more easy, more sought for, or more promised ?

“ I do not know why I have not again seen the gentleman to whom I gave the letter for him, nor whether he received it or answered it. You who are his secretary can help me to good ink, as the saying is, and I pray you without reserve to do so, for ceremony may be laid aside where there is friendship and confidence. From an audience I should expect my liberty, and can then determine more fully upon the publication of my works and the dedication. In printing them, I will remember your suggestion, but my own wishes must be executed, for my malady has not so impaired my senses that I am unable to form sound resolutions.

“ I have received the dedication and canzone you sent me, and expect that when the Reverend Father Licino returns, the city of Bergamo will do me the good offices I have prayed for with his highness, or those which others should pray for me, because my infirmity has been so long, my imprisonment so tedious, my life is so advanced, and my labors have proved so fruitless, that they might move not only Bergamo, but all Italy to pity. Kiss the hands of the illus-



trious patriarch Gonzaga for me, and those of the excellent Signore Don Odoardo, and give the sonnet to Cavalier Guarnello, if I send it to you, for I have not yet written it, but will strive to do so to-night or to-morrow, and if I can't I won't detain this letter, but send it by another post, and you will then make my apology to him, and excuse me, if I am not sufficiently excused by phrenzy, impediments and occupations, and in part by studies which I can neither continue nor entirely abandon. Live happy."\*

The fragment of a letter addressed to Gonzaga, without date, but written during his imprisonment, also deserves to be quoted.

"I am sick, and my illness is not a matter of jest, nor without peril, and therefore I have need of a physician and a confessor, and perhaps of some one who will exorcise spirits, and chase

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\* This letter is without date, but the "forty years and more," and the twenty in the service of the house of Este, and in prison, fix it after 1584. Black and Serassi assign it to 1586. See *Lettere*, tom. ii., 158, 163, ed. Pisa. *Black's Life*, vol. ii., p. 169.

away phantasms. Among the sorest infirmities of the mind is ambition, which attacked it many years ago, and has never been fully cured, so that I could not really despise the honors of this world, and those who bestow them.”\*

In 1587, after his liberation from Sant’ Anna, or more properly speaking after he had been given in ward to the Duke of MANTUA, upon the guarantee that he was not to leave his dominions,† and probably on the assurance also that he was not to write or speak disrespectfully of ALPHONSO, he thus addresses his friend SCIPIO GONZAGA.

“I am in feeble health and utterly melancholy, so that I am reputed mad by others and myself, when, being unable to conceal the many powerful thoughts, cares and inquietudes of an infirm and distempered mind, I break out into long soliloquies, which, if they are overheard,

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\* Lettere, tom. ii., 98, 99.

† See ante, 56, and also Serassi, Vita, 369.

as they often may be, make known to others my designs, and what I hope and wish.

“ Philosophy is the physic of the mind, and therewith I often minister to myself, and then begin to laugh at my misfortunes, and all the injuries I have suffered. What more? I laugh even at the bad opinion men have taken up against me, and at my own foolishness which confirmed it. But this laughter is well nigh to fury, and I have need of hellebore, or some such other medicament, to relieve the body, full of ill-humors, and to correct the stomach, whence certain vapors ascend to the head, that disturb it in thought and speech.”\*

In 1588 he consulted Pisani, a distinguished physician, and a short extract from his letter will suffice to give an idea of the state of his disorder :

. . . “ I will not venture to express my own opinion, therefore, respecting my long malady. It is almost useless to say, that there

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\* The date is the 1st October, 1587. *Lettere*, tom. iv., p. 98.

being two species of melancholy, the one constitutional, the other occasioned by improper food, I am affected by the latter to such a degree that not only the brain is disturbed, but the whole mass of the blood corrupted ; and by a third species which begins in the stomach, with certain intestine commotions, and exhalation of vapors, that cruelly obscure the intellect. Nor will I add that my miserable despondency is increased by witchcraft and enchantment, that I may not appear to resemble other madmen."\*

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\* Lettere, tom. iv., 283.

## CHAPTER IX.

ENOUGH, perhaps more than enough of these quotations, multiplied with the view of fairly presenting, in their full force, those singular illusions of the senses, sometimes confounded with madness by Tasso himself, as they have often been by others, both before and since. In order to rebut the presumption they tend to create, by his own testimony, it would be requisite to cite nearly all else that he wrote or did for fourteen or fifteen years of his life. This is manifestly impossible. It must not be forgotten, however, that during this period, besides maintaining an extensive correspondence, he entirely remodelled his Jerusalem, composed his poem on the creation, and wrote or corrected a great many other works.\*

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\* Without pretending to give a complete list, or to be very exact in dates, the following may be enumerated:

Il Malpiglio ovvero della Corte, 1582 or 1583.

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MANSO's long account of TASSO's eloquent imaginary conversation with a spirit, is the only thing material that could be added to inflame the suspicion of his sanity after his liberation. In that account MANSO himself has been suspected of poetical exaggeration. But assuming it as all true, we are brought to the inquiry whether the rest of his conduct and writings, not merely so rational and sensible, but so philosophical and full of genius, can be ascribed to a lunatic, with sane intervals, or whether

Il Malpiglio Secondo, 1583.

La Molza ovvero dell' Amore, 1583.

Il Beltramo ovvero della Cortesia, 1584.

Il Gianluca ovvero delle Maschere, 1584.

Il Ghirlinzone ovvero l' Epitaffio, 1585.

Il Forestiero Napoletano, 1585.

Il Cataneo ovvero degl' Idoli, 1585.

Della Dignità, (revised and finished,) 1585.

Apologia, etc., 1585.

Risposta all' Academia della Crusca, 1585.

Il Costantino ovvero della Clemenza, 1589.

Il Manso ovvero dell' Amicizia, 1592.

Il Conte ovvero dell' Imprese, 1594.

Il monte Oliveto.

Orazione in lode della casa Medici.

Il Torrismondo.

Il Nifo ovvero del Piacere.

Dialogo della Poesia Toscana, etc.

there is any satisfactory mode of accounting for the extraordinary delusions to which he was subject without supposing a derangement of his intellectual powers. Just before his death preparations were made to crown him solemnly with laurel in the capitol. Was all ROME mad likewise? But if that ceremony may be suspected of poetical enthusiasm, what shall we say of his lawsuit at Naples, where insanity was pleaded in opposition to his claim.\* The pedantry of quoting a judicial decision on a matter where all the world have become judges, will not, most assuredly, be committed. But the tribunals of justice are little liable to enthusiasm, and the strong effect of TASSO's life and works in opposition to the charge, must be remarked, not only in the final event of the case, but even on Dr. Black himself, whose whole book was written upon the theory of the poet's madness. The biographer calls the allegation of insanity, "*this absurd and inhuman*

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\* Serassi, 460. It does not certainly appear that a judgment was pronounced upon the point; but the cause proceeded, and was compromised by the payment of an annuity, which it is not presumable would have been done if the plea of insanity could have been supported.

*objection.*" Inhuman, if you please, though that might be disputed, but how *absurd*, if he were really mad?

A more whimsical victory over one's own favorite hypothesis, has rarely been achieved by the involuntary and unobserved impulse of common sense.

But if TASSO's life and works repel conclusively the supposition of madness, how are we to explain those extraordinary hallucinations of his, that seem utterly irreconcilable with a sound intellect?

In his day, and even much more recently, this would have been entirely impossible; but modern science, by the collection of authentic materials, and the habit of strict and patient induction and analysis, has opened a new chapter in the history of the human mind; and it may now be affirmed, that all the symptoms of TORQUATO can be accounted for upon philosophical principles, without at all supposing his understanding to be disturbed.

Let it be remarked that TASSO, in attributing his disease to supernatural agency, reasoned in the spirit of his age, when a disbelief in witch-



craft was heretical.\* Be it observed, also, and this is by far more important, that he often speaks doubtfully of the facts, which are at variance with his judgment, and yields belief to them reluctantly only when compelled by the apparently irresistible evidence of his senses. Thus he says as to the enchantments he is not so certain, because the rats, who appear to him possessed, may make the noise they do naturally, and the origin of the other sounds may be traced to human means.† Then follow the names and sounds he hears, and the objects he sees, or thinks he sees.

In his letter to Mercuriale he says, "I appear to have heard, (if indeed I have not really heard,)" etc. We find him also congratulating himself on his resolution to defend his *will* from the devil; on his capacity to withhold his assent, which is, he says, the mark of a rational mind, and on his ability to compose.

He *seems* to behold flames in the air, and he

\* Black himself very reasonably attributes the *thefts* of the foletto, not to the devil, "but to Tasso's devilish attendants." Black's *Life of Tasso*, vol. ii., p. 175.

† Vide, ante, letter to CATANEO.

hears noises and sees sights entirely unaccountable to him by natural causes, and hence the evil is attributed to magic, and the good to miracle.

If the phantasms of Tasso can be explained, therefore, without admitting his intellect to be impaired, the riddle of his supposed madness is solved. This subject has of late years been so ably and admirably discussed in various works, both popular and scientific, that an apology is due to our readers for the diffuseness of our borrowed explanations. But the treatises of Dr. Ferriar and Dr. Hibbert, Sir Walter Scott's *Demonology and Witchcraft*, and Brewster's *Natural Magic*, are as yet sealed books to such as speak only the language of Tasso, into which it is not improbable this essay may be translated. Those who read them in the original, therefore, will hold us excused.

"The leading case, as it may be called, on this subject, is that of M. Nicolai, the celebrated bookseller of Berlin. This gentleman was a man of letters, and had the moral courage to lay before the Philosophical Society of Berlin, an account of his own sufferings, from having

been by disease subject to a series of spectral illusions. He traced his illness to a succession of disagreeable incidents which happened to him in 1791. The depression of spirit they occasioned, was increased by neglecting a periodical bleeding he had been accustomed to observe. This state of health brought on the disposition to see *phantasmata*, which frequented his apartments, presenting crowds of persons who moved and acted in his sight, and even spoke to him. The phantoms exhibited nothing unpleasant to the imagination of the learned visionary, and he had too much firmness to be otherwise affected by their presence than with a kind of curiosity, as he remained convinced from the beginning to the end of the disorder, that these singular effects were merely symptoms of the state of his health, and did not in any other respect regard them as a subject of apprehension. After some time and the use of medicine, the phantoms became less and less distinct in their outline—faded, as it were, on the eye of the patient, and, at length, totally disappeared.”\*

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\* Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft. Letter I.

“Dr. Hibbert, who has most ingeniously, as well as philosophically handled this subject, has treated it also in a medical point of view, with a science to which we make no pretence, and a precision of detail to which our superficial investigation affords us no room for extending ourselves.

“The visitation of spectral phenomena is described by this learned gentleman, as incidental to sundry complaints; and he mentions in particular, that the symptom occurs not only in plethora, as in the case of Nicolai, but is a frequent hectic symptom—often an associate of febrile and inflammatory disorders—frequently accompanying inflammation of the brain—a concomitant, also, of highly excited nervous irritability—equally connected with hypochondria, and finally, united in some cases with gout, and in others, with the effects of excitation, produced by several gases. In all these cases, there seems to be a morbid degree of sensibility, with which this symptom is ready to ally itself, and which, though inaccurate as a medical definition, may be held sufficiently descriptive of one character of the various kinds of disorder with which this painful symptom is connected.”

“A very singular and interesting illustration of such combinations as Dr. Hibbert has recorded of the spectral illusion with an actual disorder, and that of a dangerous kind, was frequently related in society by the late learned and accomplished Dr. Gregory, of Edinburgh, and sometimes, I believe, quoted in his lectures. The narrative, according to the author's best recollection, was as follows. A patient of Dr. Gregory, a person, it is understood, of some rank, having requested the Doctor's advice, made the following extraordinary statement of his complaint.

“‘I am in the habit,’ he said, ‘of dining at five, and exactly as the hour of six arrives, I am subjected to the following painful visitation. The door of the room, even when I have been weak enough to bolt it, which I have sometimes done, flies wide open; an old hag, like one of those who haunted the heath of Forres, enters with a frowning and incensed countenance, comes straight up to me, with every demonstration of spite and indignation which could characterize her who haunted the merchant of Abudah, in the oriental tale, she rushes upon me, says something, but so hastily that I can-

not discover the purport, and then strikes me a severe blow with her staff. I fall from my chair in a swoon, which is of longer or shorter endurance. To the recurrence of this apparition I am daily subjected. And such is my new and singular complaint.' The doctor immediately asked whether his patient had invited any one to sit with him when he expected such a visitation? He answered in the negative. The nature of the complaint he said, was so singular, it was so likely to be imputed to fancy, or even to mental derangement, that he shrunk from communicating the circumstance to any one. 'Then,' said the Doctor, 'with your permission, I will dine with you to day, *tête-à-tête*, and we will see if your malignant old woman will join our company.' The patient accepted the proposal with hope and gratitude, for he had expected ridicule rather than sympathy. They met at dinner, and Dr. Gregory, who suspected some nervous disorder, exerted his powers of conversation, well known to be of the most varied and brilliant character, to keep the attention of his host engaged and prevent him from thinking of the approach of the fated hour, to which he

was accustomed to look forward with so much terror. He succeeded better in his purpose than he expected. The hour of six came almost unnoticed, and it was hoped might pass away without any evil consequence ; but it was scarce a moment struck when the owner of the house exclaimed in an alarmed voice, ‘The hag comes again!’ and dropped back in his chair in a swoon, in the way he had himself described. The physician caused him to be let blood, and satisfied himself that the periodical shocks of which his patient complained arose from a tendency to apoplexy.”\*

“A second and equally remarkable instance was communicated to the author by the medical man under whose observation it fell, but who was of course desirous to keep private the name of the hero of so singular a history. Of the friend by whom the facts were attested I can only say, that if I found myself at liberty to name him, the rank which he holds in his profession as well as his attainments in science and philosophy, form an undisputed claim to the most implicit credit.

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\* Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft. Letter I.

“It was the fortune of this gentleman to be called in to attend the illness of a person now long deceased, who in his lifetime stood, as I am informed, high in a particular department of the law, which often placed the property of others at his discretion and control, and whose conduct, therefore, being open to public observation, he had for many years borne the character of a man of unusual steadiness, good sense, and integrity. He was at the time of my friend’s visits, confined principally to his sick room, sometimes to bed, yet occasionally attending to business and exerting his mind apparently with all its usual strength and energy, to the conduct of important affairs entrusted to him ; nor did there, to a superficial observer, appear anything in his conduct, while so engaged, that could argue vacillation of intellect or depression of mind. His outward symptoms of malady indicated no acute or alarming disease. But slowness of pulse, absence of appetite, difficulty of digestion, and constant depression of spirits seemed to draw their origin from some hidden cause which the patient was determined to conceal. The deep gloom of the unfortunate gentleman — the embarrassment which he



could not hide from his friendly physician — the briefness and obvious constraint with which he answered the interrogations of his medical adviser, induced my friend to take other methods for prosecuting his inquiries. He applied to the sufferer's family to learn, if possible, the source of that secret grief which was gnawing at the heart and sucking the life-blood of his unfortunate patient.

“ The persons applied to, after conversing together previously, denied all knowledge of any cause for the burthen that obviously affected their relative. So far as they knew, and they thought they could hardly be deceived, his worldly affairs were prosperous ; no family loss had occurred, which could be followed with such persevering distress ; no entanglements of affection could be supposed to apply to his age, and no sensation of severe remorse could be consistent with his character. The medical gentleman finally had recourse to serious argument with the invalid himself, and urged to him the folly of devoting himself to a lingering and melancholy death, rather than tell the subject of affliction which was thus wasting him. He specially pressed upon him

the injury he was doing to his own character by suffering it to be inferred that the secret cause of his dejection, and its consequences, was something too scandalous to be known, bequeathing in this manner to his family a suspected and dishonored name, and leaving a memory that might be associated with the idea of guilt, which the criminal had died without confessing. The patient, more moved by this species of appeal than by any which had yet been urged, expressed his desire to speak out frankly to Dr. —. Every one else was removed, and the door of the sick room made secure, when he began his confession in the following manner :

“ ‘ You cannot, my dear friend, be more conscious than I, that I am dying under the effect of a disease which consumes my vital powers ; but neither can you understand the nature of my complaint, and the manner in which it acts upon me, nor if you did, I fear, could your zeal and skill avail to rid me of it.’

“ ‘ It is possible,’ said the physician, ‘ that my skill may not equal my wish to serve you, yet medical science has many resources, of

which those unacquainted with its powers never can form an estimate. But until you plainly tell me your symptoms of complaint, it is impossible for either of us to say what may or may not be in my power, or within that of medicine.'

" 'I may answer you,' replied the patient, 'that my case is not a singular one, since we read of it in the famous novel of Le Sage. You remember doubtless the disease of which the Duke d' Olivarez is there said to have died?'

" 'Of the idea,' answered the medical gentleman, 'that he was haunted by an apparition to which he gave no credit, but died nevertheless because he was overcome, and heart-broken by its imaginary presence.'

" 'I, my dearest doctor,' said the sick man, 'am in that very case; and so painful and abhorrent is the presence of the persecuting vision, that my reason is totally inadequate to combat the effects of my morbid imagination, and I am sensible I am dying a wasted victim to an imaginary disease.'

"The medical gentleman listened with anxiety to his patient's statement, and for the present

- judiciously avoiding any contradiction of the sick man's preconceived fancy, contented himself with more minute inquiry into the nature of the apparition with which he conceived himself haunted, and into the history of the mode by which so singular a disease had made itself master of his imagination, secured, as it seemed, by strong powers of the understanding, against an attack so irregular. The sick person replied by stating that its advances were gradual, and at first not of a terrible, or even disagreeable character. To illustrate this, he gave the following account of the progress of his disease.

“ ‘ My visions,’ he said, ‘ commenced two or three years since, when I found myself from time to time embarrassed by the presence of a large cat, which came and disappeared I could not exactly tell how, till the truth was finally forced upon me, and I was compelled to regard it as no domestic household cat, but a bubble of the elements, which had no existence save in my deranged visual organs, or depraved imagination. Still I had not that positive objection to the animal entertained by a late gallant highland chieftain, who has been seen

to change to all the colors of his own plaid, if a cat by accident happened to be in the room with him, even though he did not see it. On the contrary I am rather a friend to cats, and endured with so much equanimity the presence of my imaginary attendant, that it had become almost indifferent to me; when, within the course of a few months, it gave place to, or rather was succeeded by, a spectre of a more important sort, or which at least had a more imposing appearance. This was no other than the apparition of a gentleman usher, dressed as if to wait upon a lord lieutenant of Ireland, a lord high commissioner of the kirk, or any other who bears on his brow the rank and stamp of delegated sovereignty.

“ ‘ This personage, arrayed in a court dress, with a bag and sword, tamboured waistcoat and chapeau-bras, glided beside me like the ghost of Beau NASH, and whether in my own house or in another ascended the stairs before me, as if to announce me in the drawing-room; and sometimes appeared to mingle with the company, though it was sufficiently evident that they were not aware of his presence, and that I alone was sensible of the

visionary honors which this imaginary being seemed desirous to render me. This freak of the fancy did not produce much impression on me, though it led me to entertain doubts on the nature of my disorder, and alarm for the effect it might produce upon my intellects. But that modification of my disease had also its appointed duration. After a few months the phantom of the gentleman usher was seen no more, but was succeeded by one horrible to the sight, and distressing to the imagination, being no other than the image of death itself—the apparition of a *skeleton*. Alone, or in company,’ continued the unfortunate invalid, ‘the presence of this last phantom never quits me. I in vain tell myself a hundred times over, that it is no reality, but merely an image summoned up by the morbid acuteness of my own excited imagination and deranged organs of sight. But what avail such reflections while the emblem at once and presage of mortality is before my eyes, and while I feel myself, though in fancy only, the companion of a phantom representing a ghastly inhabitant of the grave, even while I yet breathe on earth? Science, philosophy, and even religion has no cure for such a disor-

der ; and I feel too surely that I shall die the victim of this melancholy disease, although I have no belief whatever in the reality of the phantom which it places before me.'

"The physician was distressed to perceive from these details how strongly this visionary apparition was fixed in the imagination of his patient. He ingeniously urged the sick man, who was then in bed, with questions concerning the circumstances of the phantom's appearance, trusting to lead him, as a sensible man, into such contradictions and inconsistencies as would bring his common sense, which seemed to be unimpaired, so strongly into the field that it might combat successfully the fantastic disorder which produced such fatal effects.

" 'This skeleton, then,' said the doctor, 'seems to you to be always present to your eyes ?'

" 'It is my fate, unhappily,' answered the invalid, 'always to see it.'

" 'Then I understand,' continued the physician, 'it is now present to your imagination ?'

" 'To my imagination it certainly is so,' replied the sick man.

" 'And in what part of the chamber do you

now conceive the apparition to appear?" the physician inquired.

" 'Immediately at the foot of my bed,' answered the invalid. 'When the curtains are left a little open, the skeleton, to my thinking, is placed between them, and fills the vacant space.'

" 'You say you are sensible of the illusion,' said his friend, 'have you firmness to convince yourself of the truth of this? Can you take courage enough to rise and place yourself in the spot so seeming to be occupied, and convince yourself of the illusion?'

"The poor man sighed, and shook his head negatively.

" 'Well,' said the doctor, 'we will try the experiment otherwise.' Accordingly he rose, and placing himself between the two half-drawn curtains at the foot of the bed, indicated as the place occupied by the apparition, asked if the spectre was still visible.

" 'Not entirely so,' replied the patient, 'because your person is between him and me, but I observe his skull peering above your shoulder.'

"It is alleged the man of science started at the moment, despite philosophy, on receiving



an answer ascertaining with such minuteness that the ideal spectre was close to his own person. He resorted to other means of investigation and cure, but with equally indifferent success. The patient sunk into deeper and deeper dejection, and died in the same distress of mind in which he had spent the latter months of his life ; and his case remains a melancholy instance of the power of imagination to kill the body even when its fantastic terrors cannot overcome the intellect of the unfortunate persons who suffer under them. The patient in the present case sunk under his malady, and the circumstances of his singular disorder remaining concealed, he did not, by his last illness and death, lose any of the well-merited reputation for prudence and sagacity which had attended him during the whole course of his life.”\*

Thus far Sir Walter Scott. Sir David Brewster, in his letters on natural magic, gives a most interesting and satisfactory account of

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\* Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft. Letter I.

this class of phenomena, and relates the following very singular case :

“ A few years ago I had occasion to spend some days under the same roof with the lady to whose case I have above referred. At that time she had seen no spectral illusions, and was acquainted with the subject only from the interesting volume of Dr. Hibbert. In conversing with her about the cause of these apparitions, I mentioned that if she should ever see such a thing she might distinguish a genuine ghost existing externally, and seen as an external object from one created by the mind, by merely pressing one eye, or straining them both so as to see objects double ; for in this case the external object, or supposed apparition, would invariably be doubled, while the impression on the retina created by the mind would remain single. This observation recurred to her when she unfortunately became subject to the same illusions ; but she was too well acquainted with their nature to require any such evidence of their mental origin ; and the state of agitation which generally accompanies them seems to

have prevented her from making the experiment as a matter of curiosity.

"The first illusion to which Mrs. A. was subject, was one which affected only the ear. On the 26th of December, 1830, about half past four in the afternoon, she was standing near the fire in the hall, and on the point of going up stairs to dress, when she heard, as she supposed, her husband's voice calling her by name, '—— —, come here! come to me!' She imagined he was calling at the door to have it opened, but on going there and opening the door she was surprised to find no person there. Upon returning to the fire, she again heard the same voice calling out very distinctly and loudly, '—— —, come, come here!' She then opened two other doors of the same room, and upon seeing nobody she returned to the fire-place. After a few moments she heard the same voice still calling, '—— —, come to me, come, come away!' in a loud, plaintive, and somewhat impatient tone. She answered as loudly, 'Where are you? I don't know where you are;' still imagining that he was somewhere in search of her; but on receiving no answer she shortly went up stairs. On Mr.

A.'s return to the house about half an hour afterwards, she inquired why he called her so often and where he was; and she was of course greatly surprised to learn that he had not been near the house at the time. A similar illusion, which excited no particular notice at the moment, occurred to Mrs. A., when residing at Florence about ten years before, and when she was in perfect health. When she was undressing after a ball, she heard a voice call her repeatedly by name, and she was at that time unable to account for it.

"The next illusion which occurred to Mrs. A. was of a more alarming character. On the 30th of December, about four o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. A. came down stairs into the drawing room, which she had quitted only a few minutes before, and on entering the room saw her husband, as she supposed, standing with his back to the fire. As he had gone out to take a walk about half an hour before, she was surprised to see him there, and asked him why he had returned so soon. The figure looked fixedly at her with a serious and thoughtful expression of countenance, but did not speak. Supposing that his mind was absorbed in

thought, she sat down in an arm-chair near the fire, and within two feet at most of the figure, which she still saw standing before her. As its eyes, however, continued to be fixed upon her, she said, after the lapse of a few minutes, 'Why don't you speak ——?' The figure immediately moved off towards the window at the farther end of the room, with its eyes still gazing on her, and it passed so very close to her in doing so, that she was struck by the circumstance of hearing no step, nor sound, nor feeling her clothes brushed against, nor even any agitation of the air. Although she was now convinced that the figure was not her husband, yet she never for a moment supposed that it was anything supernatural, and was soon convinced that it was a spectral illusion. As soon as this conviction had established itself in her mind, she recollected the experiment which I had suggested, of trying to double the object; but before she was able to do this, the figure had retreated to the window, where it disappeared. Mrs. A. immediately followed it, shook the curtains and examined the window, the impression having been so distinct and forcible that she was unwilling to believe it was

not a reality. Finding, however, that the figure had no natural means of escape, she was convinced that she had seen a spectral apparition, like those recorded in Dr. Hibbert's work, and she consequently felt no alarm or agitation. The appearance was seen in bright daylight and lasted four or five minutes. When the figure stood close to her it concealed the objects behind it, and the apparition was full as vivid as the reality.

"On these two occasions Mrs. A. was alone, but when the next phantasm appeared her husband was present. This took place on the 4th of January, 1830. About ten o'clock at night, when Mr. and Mrs. A. were sitting in the drawing-room, Mr. A. took up the poker to stir the fire, and when he was in the act of doing this, Mrs. A. exclaimed, 'Why, there's a cat in the room!' 'Where?' asked Mr. A. 'There, close to you,' she replied. 'Where?' he repeated. 'Why, on the rug, to be sure, between yourself and the coal-scuttle.' Mr. A., who had still the poker in his hand, pushed it in the direction mentioned. 'Take care,' cried Mrs. A., 'take care, you are hitting her with the poker.' Mr. A. again asked her to point out exactly

where she saw the cat. She replied, 'Why, sitting up there, close to your feet, on the rug. She is looking at me. It is Kitty — come here, here, Kitty.' There were two cats in the house, one of which went by this name, and they were rarely, if ever, in the drawing room. At this time, Mrs. A. had no idea that the sight of the cat was an illusion. When she was asked to touch it, she got up for the purpose, and seemed as if she were pursuing something that moved away. She followed a few steps, and then said, 'It has gone under the chair.' Mr. A. assured her it was an illusion, but she would not believe it. He then lifted up the chair, and Mrs. A. saw nothing more of it. The room was then searched all over, and nothing found in it. There was a dog lying on the hearth who would have betrayed great uneasiness if a cat had been in the room, but he lay perfectly quiet. In order to be quite certain, Mr. A. rung the bell and sent for the two cats, both of which were found in the housekeeper's room.

"About a month after this occurrence, Mrs. A., who had taken a somewhat fatiguing drive during the day, was preparing to go to bed about eleven o'clock at night, and sitting before

the dressing-glass was occupied in arranging her hair. She was in a listless and drowsy state of mind, but fully awake. When her fingers were in active motion among the papilotes, she was suddenly startled by seeing in the mirror the figure of a near relation, who was then in Scotland and in perfect health. The apparition appeared over her left shoulder, and its eyes met hers in the glass. It was enveloped in grave-clothes, closely pinned, as is usual with corpses, around the head and under the chin, and though the eyes were open, the features were solemn and rigid. The dress was evidently a shroud, as Mrs. A. remarked even the punctured pattern usually worked in a peculiar manner around the edges of that garment. Mrs. A. described herself as at the same time sensible of a feeling like what we conceive of fascination, compelling her to gaze on this melancholy apparition, which was as distinct and vivid as any reflected reality could be, the light of the candles upon the dressing-table appearing to shine fully upon its face. After a few minutes she turned round to look for the reality of the form over her shoulder, but it was not visible, and it had also disappeared



from the glass when she looked again in that direction.

“On another occasion the same lady, having dismissed her maid, was preparing to go to bed, when on raising her eyes, she saw seated in a large easy-chair before her, the figure of a deceased friend, the sister of Mr. A. The figure was dressed as had been usual with her, with great neatness, but in a gown of a peculiar kind, such as Mrs. A. had never seen her wear, but exactly such as had been described to her by a common friend as having been worn by Mr. A.’s sister during her last visit to England. Mrs. A. paid particular attention to the dress, air, and appearance of the figure, which sat in an easy attitude in the chair, holding a handkerchief in one hand. Mrs. A. tried to speak to it, but experienced a difficulty in doing so, and in about three minutes the figure disappeared. About a minute afterwards, Mr. A. came into the room and found Mrs. A. slightly nervous, but fully aware of the delusive nature of the apparition. She described it as having all the vivid coloring and apparent reality of life, and for some hours preceding this and other visions, she experienced a peculiar sensation in her

eyes, which seemed to be relieved when the vision had ceased.

“ On the 5th of October, between one and two o'clock in the morning, Mr. A. was awoke by Mrs. A., who told him she had just seen the figure of his deceased mother draw aside the bed-curtains and appear between them. The dress and the look of the apparition were precisely those in which Mr. A.'s mother had been last seen by Mrs. A. at Paris in 1824.

“ On the 11th of October, when sitting in the drawing-room, on one side of the fire-place, she saw the figure of another deceased friend moving towards her from the window at the farther end of the room. It approached the fire-place, and sat down in the chair opposite. As there were several persons in the room at the time, she describes the idea uppermost in her mind to have been the fear lest they should be alarmed at her staring in the way she was conscious of doing at vacancy, and should fancy her intellect disordered. Under the influence of this fear, and recollecting a story of a similar effect in Sir Walter Scott's work on demonology and witchcraft, which she had lately read, she summoned up the requisite resolution to cross

the space before the fire-place, and seat herself in the same chair with the figure. The apparition remained perfectly distinct till she sat down, as it were, in its lap, when it vanished.

“ On the 26th of the same month, about two P. M., Mrs. A. was sitting in a chair by the window in the same room with her husband. He heard her exclaim, ‘ What have I seen !’ And on looking at her he observed a strange expression in her eyes and countenance. A carriage and four had appeared to her to be driving up the entrance road to the house. As it approached she felt inclined to go up stairs to prepare to receive company, but as if spell-bound she was unable to move or speak. The carriage approached, and as it arrived within a few yards of the window, she saw the figures of the postillions, and the persons inside, take the ghastly appearance of skeletons and other hideous figures. The whole then vanished entirely, when she uttered the above-mentioned exclamation.

“ On the 3d of December, about nine P. M., when Mr. and Mrs. A. were sitting near each other in the drawing-room occupied in reading,

Mr. A. felt a pressure on his foot. On looking up he observed Mrs. A.'s eyes fixed with a strong unnatural stare on a chair about nine or ten feet distant. Upon asking her what she saw, the expression of her countenance changed, and upon recovering herself she told Mr. A. that she had seen his brother, who was alive and well at the moment in London, seated in the opposite chair, but dressed in grave-clothes, and with a ghastly countenance, as if scarcely alive.

"Such," continues the author last quoted, "is a brief account of the various spectral illusions observed by Mrs. A. In describing them I have used the very words employed by her husband in his communications to me on the subject,\* and the reader may be assured that the descriptions are neither heightened by fancy nor amplified by invention. The high character and intelligence of the lady, and the station of her husband in society, and as a man of learning and science, would authenticate the most marvellous narrative, and satisfy the most

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\* *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, New Series, No. 4, pp. 218, 219; No. 6, p. 244; and No. 8, p. 261.

scrupulous mind, that the case has been philosophically, as well as faithfully described. In narrating events which we regard as supernatural, the mind has a strong tendency to give more prominence to what appears to itself the most wonderful ; but from the very same cause, when we describe extraordinary and inexplicable phenomena, which we believe to be the result of natural causes, the mind is prone to strip them of their most marvellous points, and bring them down to the level of ordinary events. From the very commencement of the spectral illusions seen by Mrs. A., both she and her husband were well aware of their nature and origin, and both of them paid the most minute attention to the circumstances which accompanied them, not only with the view of throwing light upon so curious a subject, but for the purpose of ascertaining their connection with the state of health under which they appeared.

“ As the spectres seen by Nicolai and others had their origin in bodily indisposition, it becomes interesting to learn the state of Mrs. A.’s health when she was under the influence of these illusions. During the six weeks within

which the three first illusions took place, she had been considerably reduced and weakened by a troublesome cough, and the weakness which this occasioned was increased by her being prevented from taking a daily tonic. Her general health had not been strong, and long experience has put it beyond a doubt, that her indisposition arises from a disordered state of the digestive organs. Mrs. A. has naturally a morbidly sensitive imagination, which so painfully affects her corporeal impressions, that the account of any person having suffered severe pain by accident or otherwise, occasionally produces acute twinges of pain in the corresponding parts of her person. The account, for example, of the amputation of an arm, will produce an instantaneous and severe sense of pain in her own arm. She is subject to talk in her sleep with great fluency, to repeat long passages of poetry, particularly when she is unwell, and even to cap verses for half an hour together, never failing to quote lines beginning with the final letter of the preceding one till her memory is exhausted.

“ Although it is not probable that we shall ever be able to understand the actual manner

in which a person of sound mind beholds spectral apparitions in the broad light of day, yet we may arrive at such a degree of knowledge on the subject as to satisfy rational curiosity, and to strip the phenomena of every attribute of the marvellous. Even the vision of natural objects presents to us insurmountable difficulties, if we seek to understand the precise part which the mind performs in perceiving them; but the philosopher considers that he has given a satisfactory explanation of vision when he demonstrates that distinct pictures of external objects are painted on the retina, and that this membrane communicates with the brain by means of nerves of the same substance as itself, and of which it is merely an expansion. Here we reach the gulf which human intelligence cannot pass; and if the presumptuous mind of man shall dare to extend its speculations further, it will do it only to evince its incapacity and mortify its pride.

“ In his admirable work on this subject, Dr. Hibbert has shown that spectral illusions are nothing more than ideas, or the recollected images of the mind, which in certain states of bodily indisposition have been rendered more

vivid than actual impressions ; or to use other words, that the pictures in the ‘ mind’s eye’ are more vivid than the pictures in the body’s eye. The principle has been placed by Dr. Hibbert beyond the reach of doubt ; but I propose to go much farther, and to show that the ‘ mind’s eye’ is actually the body’s eye, and that the retina is the common tablet on which both classes of impressions are painted, and by means of which they receive their visual existence according to the same optical laws. Nor is this true merely in the case of spectral illusions ; it holds good of all ideas recalled by the memory, or created by the imagination, and may be regarded as a fundamental law in the science of pneumatology.

“ In the healthy state of the mind and body, the relative intensity of these two classes of impressions on the retina is nicely adjusted. The mental pictures are transient, and comparatively feeble, and in ordinary temperaments are never capable of disturbing or effacing the direct images of visible objects. The affairs of life could not be carried on if the memory were to intrude bright representations of the past into the domestic scene, or scatter them over the



external landscape. The two opposite impressions, indeed, could not co-exist; the same nervous fibre which is carrying from the brain to the retina the figures of the memory, could not, at the same instant, be carrying back the impressions of external objects from the retina to the brain. The mind cannot perform two different functions at the same instant, and the direction of its attention to one of the two classes of impressions, necessarily produces the extinction of the other; but so rapid is the exercise of mental power, that the alternate appearance and disappearance of the two contending impressions, is no more recognised than the successive observations of external objects during the twinkling of the eyelids. If we look, for example, at the façade of St. Paul's, and without changing our position call to mind the celebrated view of Mont Blanc from Lyons, the picture of the cathedral, though actually impressed upon the retina, is momentarily lost sight of by the mind, exactly like an object seen by indirect vision; and during the instant the recollected image of the mountain, towering above the subjacent range, is distinctly seen, but in a tone of subdued coloring

and indistinct outline. When the purpose of its recall is answered it quickly disappears, and the picture of the cathedral again resumes the ascendancy.

“ In darkness and solitude, when external objects no longer interfere with the pictures of the mind, they become more vivid and distinct; and in the state between waking and sleeping the intensity of the impressions approaches to that of visible objects. With persons of studious habits, who are much occupied with the operations of their own minds, the mental pictures are much more distinct than in ordinary persons; and in the midst of abstract thought, external objects even cease to make any impression on the retina. A philosopher, absorbed in his contemplations, experiences a temporary privation of the use of his senses. His children or his servants will enter the room directly before his eyes without being seen. They will speak to him without being heard, and they will even try to rouse him from his reverie without being felt, although his eyes, his ears, and his nerves, actually receive the impressions of light, sound, and touch. In such cases, however, the philosopher is voluntarily pur-

suings a train of thought in which his mind is deeply interested ; but even ordinary men, not much addicted to speculations of any kind, often perceive in their 'mind's eye' the pictures of deceased or absent friends, or even ludicrous creations of fancy, which have no connection whatever with the train of their thoughts. Like spectral apparitions they are entirely involuntary, and though they may have sprung from a regular series of associations, yet it is frequently impossible to discover a single link in the chain.

“If it be true then, that the pictures of the mind and spectral illusions are equally impressions upon the retina, the latter will differ in no respect from the former, but in the degree of vividness with which they are seen ; and those frightful apparitions become nothing more than our ordinary ideas rendered more brilliant by some accidental and temporary derangement of the vital functions.”\*

More minute and detailed explanations would be foreign to the object of this work. Those

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\* Letters on Natural Magic.

who desire them will consult the various philosophical treatises in which they may be found.\* Nor is it our purpose to institute any tedious comparison for the purpose of showing that TASSO's disorder was of this particular description. Either the thing proves itself, or we should fail to prove it.

He lived nearly nine years after his release, was invited to fill a professorship in GENOA, which he declined, and in all manner of wisdom, save only the worldly, was reputed not merely sane but wise.

In his letters he often complains pathetically of sickness, poverty, loss of memory, melancholy, despair, and even phrenzy; but after 1587, there are no further details respecting his imaginary sights and sounds, or the pranks of the FOLETTI.†

Unless, therefore, MANSO's account of his conversation with a spirit is to be credited,

\* See, beside the works already referred to, Abercrombie's *Inquiry concerning the Intellectual Powers*.

† See *Lettere*, tom. i., [191](#), [225](#), [311](#), [345](#); tom. ii., [26](#), [27](#), [63](#), [94](#), [116](#), [183](#), [187](#), [203](#), [207](#); tom. iii., [234](#); tom. iv., [16](#), [223](#), [237](#), [288](#), [351](#).

there is no reason for believing that his phantasms continued, though he still feared poison, and desired a reliquary to protect him from spells.\*

He frequently wrote to Duke ALPHONSO, imploring his forgiveness, but in vain; and the last of these letters, dated not long before his death, is more in the tone of one who had done than suffered injury:

\* Lettere, tom. iv., 80; tom. ii., 207. The only letters that favor the supposition of his spectral apparitions having tormented him after his release, are those of 1586: Lettere, tom. ii., 36, 37, 116; those of 1587: tom. i., 216; tom. ii., 294, 295; tom. iii., 241; those of 1588: tom. i., 186, and tom. iv., 246, except such as are above quoted and his last letter to Constantino. Of the *Rime*, the only passages that occur to us, as in conflict with any part of the foregoing theory are, sonnet 442, tom. iii., to Manso, when he says:

"Io fatto quasi per dolore insano,"

and sonnet 179, tom. iii., to Veniero:

"Qui dove sol pietà forse mi serra."

It is not impossible his malady may have returned at intervals, but becoming aware that it had caused his sanity to be doubted, he ceased to speak of it.

*" To the Duke of Ferrara.*

"If the past could return, there is nothing I would rather choose than always to have served your highness, or at least not to have lost your favor by misfortune. But since it is impossible to correct the past, which is long, in what remains to me of the future, which is very short, I will take more care to avoid your highness's displeasure than that of anybody else. This has been my resolution for many years, however obstructed or badly executed. I beg you anew to have compassion on me ; and I pray God with the most devout heart to grant me his pardon, and that of your serene highness. Deign to consider what the Prince of Venosa has written, and what I have said several times to your ambassador, and may God send you long life and happiness. Rome, 10th of December, 1594."

Our task is finished. We have but followed the advice of Michael Angelo : "The statue is in the marble ; seek it there and you will find it."

THE END.

## ERRATA.

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- Page 37, note, line 3. Instead of "Doltore" read *Dottore*.  
8. Instead of "picta" read *pietà*.  
10. Instead of "Suglio" read *Luglio*.  
74, note, line 2. Instead of "origina" read *original*.  
135, note, last line. Instead of "innabzar" read *innalzar*.  
139, note, line 2. Instead of "Inferro" read *Inferno*.



















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